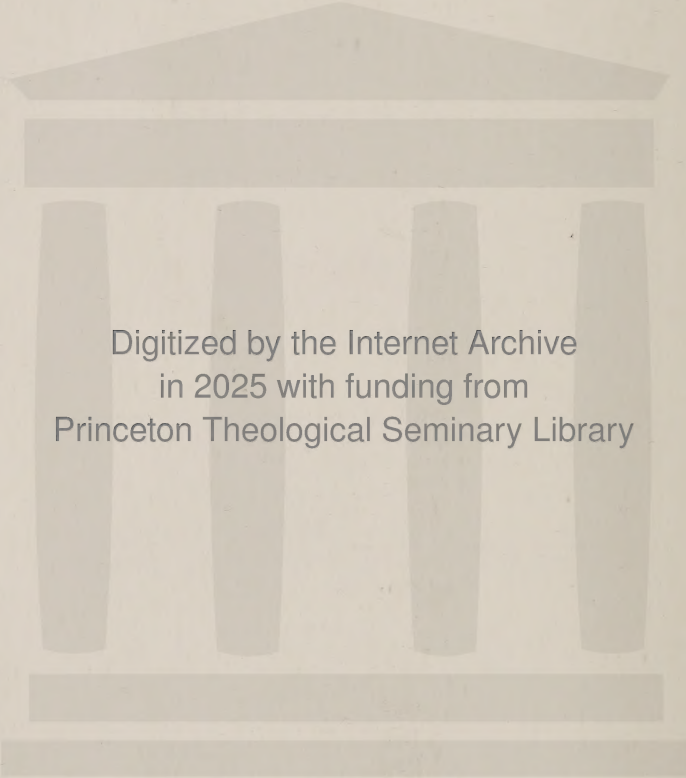


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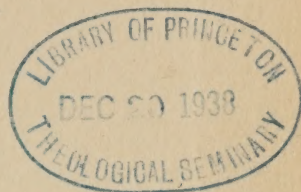
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HENRY WARD BEECHER'S  
SPEAKING ART



# Henry Ward Beecher's Speaking Art



By  
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Art of Preaching"*



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## FOREWORD

S PARKES CADMAN styled Henry Ward Beecher the greatest preacher of the past two hundred years.<sup>1</sup> At times he has been termed the American Demosthenes, because of his work in England in 1863, and frequently he has been described as the Shakespeare of the pulpit. Interest in Henry Ward Beecher as a preacher and orator will never die out. His life and sayings are so intertwined with the illustrious men and vital issues of the nineteenth century, that one can not read very far into the history of the nineteenth century without finding reference upon reference to him and his work.

The first six chapters in the book are original studies in Henry Ward Beecher's art of public speaking. I trust they will make the Beecher material more interesting. It might arouse interest to know how wide Beecher's influence has been on public speaking, and to know in what respects he has contributed to our knowledge of the instruments of persuasion.

The next six chapters are taken from Beecher's *Star Papers* which he contributed to "The Independent," at various times when he was editor. Throughout his life he seemed to be interested in talking about his craft. He had a student's interest in the instruments of persuasion. When he returned from England in 1863 he spoke freely to his people about his experience

<sup>1</sup> "Henry Ward Beecher's Shakespearian imagination was shown in all its regal might both in the pulpit and upon the platform. Competent authorities rank him as the first preacher of the century; I venture to go further and place him at the summit of the sacred oratory of the last two hundred years. His sermons and speeches exhibit a larger knowledge of human nature, a clearer induction of the things which men have in common, and a more sterling rectitude of utterance than are found in most modern preachers. His clear vision, passionate devotion, dramatic visualization, versatility, pathos, humor and emotional range enabled him, after throwing off the incubus of a burdensome traditionalism, to stand out as the supreme prophet of Christianity for the generation he drew to his feet and served so incomparably."—S. PARKES CADMAN, *Ambassadors of God*, p. 80 (Macmillan).



with turbulent audiences; this report constitutes Chapter XIII. In 1870, he gave a lecture on preaching to the students of Princeton Theological Seminary. It was probably this lecture on preaching which gave Henry Sage the idea of endowing a chair on preaching, the first incumbent of which was to be his pastor, Henry Ward Beecher. Then follows for eight chapters the *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, first series; I have edited these so that the material selected best suits our purpose. Chapter XXIV is the *Lecture on Oratory* given in Philadelphia in 1876. The last two chapters, XXV and XXVI, are excerpts from the lectures given in England in 1886.

A word needs to be said about the repetition which the reader will find in the book. I hope that such repetitions will not disturb but that, on the other hand, they will serve to make clear what were the fundamental principles on which Beecher based his preaching. In fact, I hope that the reader may find some pleasure in watching the recurrence of certain experiences which led to the discovery of the art of preaching. For example, the discovery of the "you all knows" was regarded by Beecher as a landmark in his success, the most valuable lesson he ever learned about his profession. It is no wonder that he tells and retells the incident. If it was important for Beecher it is important for the rest of us.

The appeal of a volume such as this will be wide and varied. We all speak. We all want to know how best to use our powers of persuasion. And we welcome anyone who can tell us how to use our speech more effectively. Not only preachers will find much of value in this book but students of public speaking will find it a mine of valuable suggestions. I should think that it would find its way into collateral reading lists in classes in public speaking. Most of the theory regarding public speaking has been built up from the deductions of practitioners of the art. The book might conceivably be used as a text in a course in the study of great orators. Theological seminaries will discover much in it that is helpful to students of preaching. Making these lectures available will increase the effect of Beecher's theory of public speaking, which will be beneficial because it is based on an uncanny insight into human behaviour and is motivated with a desire to ennoble mankind.

L. C.



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## I

### BEECHER AS A MAN

GAMALIEL BRADFORD several times considered writing a portrait of Henry Ward Beecher but each time gave it up. Perhaps the complexity of the subject caused him to abandon the idea. It is with some diffidence that I approach a study which Gamaliel Bradford failed to accomplish. However, if I confine myself to a setting forth of Beecher as an orator I may be able to give some slight conception of our greatest preacher. One is at a loss to know how to begin such a subject, and yet, if we follow Beecher's definition of oratory we get a natural division of our subject. He embodied the three essentials of the speech situation in his definition: "Oratory is truth sent home by all the resources of the living man."<sup>1</sup> *Influencing conduct* referred to the audience, *truth sent home* referred to the message, and all the resources of the *living man* referred to the speaker. I shall undertake in the first three chapters to present a picture of these three aspects of Beecher.

In a consideration of Beecher the man, we should consider his origin, his early training, especially his oratorical training, his early pastorates, his wide interests which give a glimpse into his mind, his character, and his reputation.

Henry Ward Beecher was the eighth son of Roxana Foote Beecher and Lyman Beecher, one of the most distinguished divines of his generation. Henry Ward's mother died when he was three years old. Much of his early training depended upon his gifted sister, Catharine, and his stepmother, Harriet Porter. As a boy he gave no promise of the great preacher he was to be. It is said that he had a thick tongue; he could not pronounce such words as "justice." One of his childish ambitions was to go to sea but his father's wish prevailed and he went to Mount Pleasant Academy to prepare for Amherst and the ministry. As

<sup>1</sup> "Lecture on Oratory," see Ch. XXIV.



a student he was in the homiletic frame of mind. For example, in 1886 he used an illustration on *Mystery of Life Cleared*, taken from nature, which had its inception in these early days. Beecher was more at home outside of the curriculum than in it. He knew every bird and flower in the vicinity. He jokingly said that the only time he ever stood next to the head of his class was when the class was arranged in a circle.<sup>2</sup> His interest in life rather than in books, which was to characterize his entire life, was apparent in these college years. It was true of Beecher as Plutarch in his essay on Demosthenes said of himself: "It is not so much by the knowledge of words that I came to the understanding of things, as by my experience of things I was enabled to follow the meaning of words."

His chief interest in the curriculum was in rhetoric and public speaking. He gladly paid tribute to Professor John Lovell, his elocution teacher at Amherst College.<sup>3</sup> Beecher declared he began his public speaking training during his sophomore year in college.<sup>4</sup> In his lecture on Wendell Phillips Beecher states that it was in a debate on slavery, when he prepared to debate against colonization, that his whole life was set.<sup>5</sup> While at Amherst Col-

<sup>2</sup> *Beecher Memorial*, Roswell Hitchcock (New York, 1887).

<sup>3</sup> In the "Christian Union" for July 14, 1880, Beecher records the following concerning his training: "When I went to Amherst, I was fortunate in passing into the hands of John Lovell, a teacher of elocution; and a better teacher for my purpose I can not conceive. His system consisted in drill, or the thorough practice of inflexions by the voice, of gesture, posture and articulation. Sometimes I was a whole hour practising my voice on a word, like justice.

"I would have to take a posture, frequently at a mark chalked on the floor. Then we would go through all the gestures; exercising each movement of the arm, and the throwing open the hand. All gestures except those of precision go in curves, the arm rising from the side, coming to the front, turning to the left or right. I was drilled as to how far the arm should come forward, where it should be started from, how far go back, and under what circumstances these movements should be made. It was drill, drill, drill, until the motions almost became second nature. Now I never know what movements I shall make. My gestures are natural because this drill made them natural to me. The only method of acquiring an effective education is by practice of not less than an hour a day, until the student has his voice and himself thoroughly subdued and trained to right expression."

<sup>4</sup> *Yale Lectures* (1st series), p. 134.

<sup>5</sup> N. D. Hillis, *Lectures and Orations by Henry Ward Beecher*, p. 208 ff. (Revell). Cf. W. S. Tyler, *History of Amherst*, p. 515 (C. W. Bryan & Co., 1873).

lege he studied S. B. Newman's *Practical System of Rhetoric*, George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric*, and Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*.<sup>6</sup> Throughout his life, he retained his interest in books on public speaking.<sup>7</sup> In Lyman Abbott's book, *Plans for Home Reading*, there is a brief article by Beecher on reading, in which he wrote, "The best essay on style that I know is that by Herbert Spencer."<sup>8</sup> Beecher's belief in the necessity of training in public speaking is summarized in the sentence: "The same considerations that make it wise for you to pass through a liberal education, make it also wise for you to pass through a liberal drill and training in all that pertains to oratory."<sup>9</sup> Beecher is a good example of an orator who owed much to art as well as to nature.<sup>10</sup> He studied other masters of his craft to learn their secret.

"There was never anything that so nearly killed me as trying to be Jonathan Edwards. I did try hard. Then I tried to be Brainard; then I tried to be James Brainard Taylor; then I tried to be Payson; then I tried to be Henry Martyn; and then I gave up, and succeeded in being nothing but just myself."<sup>11</sup>

In 1834, when twenty-one years old, Beecher graduated from Amherst College. It was quite natural that he should enter Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, to the presidency of which his father in the meantime had been called. As we look back over the life of Beecher it is easy to believe that some divine power was shaping his destiny. Before he graduated in 1837, he had seen the slave traffic as it flowed by this frontier city, situated upon the banks of the great waterways that penetrated the deep South. What had revolted Harriet Beecher Stowe and called forth *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, had also angered her brother. When he thundered against slavery in his Brooklyn pulpit a decade

<sup>6</sup> Amherst College Catalogues (1831-34).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *The Auction Sale Catalogue*, New York, 1887.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Ward Beecher, "Hints for Home Reading," *Plans for Home Reading*, Lyman Abbott, ed. (New York, 1880).

<sup>9</sup> *Yale Lectures* (1st ser.), p. 129.

<sup>10</sup> See Ch. IV.

<sup>11</sup> *Yale Lectures* (3rd ser.), p. 275.

later, he was speaking from firsthand observation. Leaving Cincinnati in 1837, he went down the Ohio River to a weak church of twenty members at Lawrenceburg. His work attracted attention and after three years he went to the Second Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis.

Beecher's *Lectures to Young Men* (1845), a book of sermons written in Indianapolis, advertised him widely. A merchant, Mr. W. T. Cutler, who happened to be in Indianapolis, heard Beecher and reported him favourably to a group headed by J. T. Howard, H. C. Bowen, and Chas. Rowland who wanted to start a Congregational Church in Brooklyn. It was arranged for Beecher to go to New York to address the American Home Missionary Society. While there he was approached with the proposition of the new church. He accepted the call largely because of the health of his wife. He was installed as pastor of this new church on October 10, 1847.

He started to draw large crowds at once. The older preachers gave Beecher six months at most. But the six months lengthened into six years and at the end of a decade he reached a fame unequalled by any other American preacher before or since his time. For forty years Plymouth Church was filled with three thousand people morning and evening.

Beecher impressed audiences with his physical energy. He seemed to be overflowing with animal spirits. His good health was not a matter of accident. In his *Yale Lectures* he devotes one session to a consideration of the orator's health. A description of Beecher given by a Scottish contemporary, W. N. Taylor, who later became pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle, New York, stresses Beecher's robust health:

"The forehead is high rather than broad; his cheeks bare; his mouth compressed and firm, with humour lurking and almost laughing in the corners; his collar turned over *à la* Byron, more perhaps for the comfort of his ears (as he is exceedingly short-necked) than for any love for that peculiar fashion. His voice is full of music, in which, by the way, he is a great proficient. His body is well developed, and his great maxim is to keep it in first-class working order, for he considers health to be a Christian duty, and rightly deems



it impossible for any man to do justice to his mental faculties without at the same time attending to his physical." <sup>12</sup>

The Rev. A. McElroy Wylie comments upon Beecher's unusual management of his voice:

"The transitions of his voice are so accurate, even in its most rapid and in its nicest distinctions, that no hearer can mistake the speaker's real meaning. He may pass from a quiet demonstration, or hot denunciation, to sincere approval or latent irony, and the inflections and qualities of his voice will show forth the meaning of his thoughts with entire clearness and precision in detail." <sup>13</sup>

Henry Fowler in his volume *The American Pulpit*, sensed that Beecher was the most important preacher of that time.<sup>14</sup> In a book of five hundred and fifteen pages treating twenty-one preachers, Fowler devotes seventy pages to Beecher, twice as much space as he gives to any other preacher. Most of the preachers treated in the volume are now but names. Beecher's reputation was an important factor in his success. He lectured widely, his sermons were sold on newsstands, books with excerpts from his sermons were published not only at home but abroad. Strangers taking the Fulton Ferry to his church in Brooklyn were told as they got off the ferry to follow the crowd. Beecher was one of the sights of New York then, just as Harry Emerson Fosdick is today.

Beecher was popular because he touched life at so many points. When Demosthenes was asked what are the most important things

<sup>12</sup> Wm. Taylor "Scottish Review," October, 1859, reprinted by Lyman Abbott and S. B. Halliday, *Life of Beecher*, p. 188. American Publishing Co., Hartford, Conn., 1888.

<sup>13</sup> A. M. Wylie, "Scribner's Monthly," October, 1872.

<sup>14</sup> Henry Fowler, *The American Pulpit* (J. M. Fairchild & Co., New York, 1856). William Pittenger, *Oratory, Sacred and Secular* (S. R. Wells, New York, 1868), also recognized the genius of Beecher and his historical importance: "Perhaps no American minister has ever become so well known to the whole body of the people as Henry Ward Beecher. . . . As a lecturer, Beecher stands among the very first. . . . We do not wonder at the great popularity of Beecher. He possesses much greater intellectual acuteness than Spurgeon, and is inferior in this particular to no one of the orators of the present day."

for a speaker to remember, he is said to have replied, "Action! Action! Action!" Demosthenes, it is thought, meant that the orator is to be a man of action. The orator must be interested in everything that concerns his fellow men. He can not be a specialist in any one department of knowledge, but must be a specialist in everything. We can get a fairly good idea of Beecher's sources if we treat a few of his major interests. If he had not been a preacher, he might have been a journalist, a farmer, an actor, a writer of fiction, an art dealer, a platform lecturer, a politician, or physiologist.<sup>15</sup>

Beecher might have been a first-rate journalist. Not long after his arrival in Cincinnati he became for a time editor of the "Cincinnati Journal." In Indianapolis, he edited "The Western Farmer," and accepted the editorial chair of the "Indiana Farmer and Gardener." In New York, he became editor of "The Independent" in 1861 and resigned in 1863.<sup>16</sup> Later in 1870 he became editor of "The Christian Union," which at a later date changed its name to "The Outlook." For several years Lyman Abbott was editorial assistant to Beecher. Of his ability as an editor, Lyman Abbott says, "Mr. Beecher was a great editorial writer and he would be universally counted so were it not for his eminence as an orator."<sup>17</sup> Mr. Beecher's first editorial appearing in "The Independent" on February 21, 1850, was entitled "*Shall We Compromise?*"<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The following extract from a letter shows Beecher's interest in public affairs. Edward Atkinson, *The Biography of an American Liberal* (1827-1905), by Harold Francis Williamson, Boston, Old Corner Book Store, 1934, p. 83: "His failure to convert Secretary McCulloch to this point of view made Mr. Atkinson apprehensive during the subsequent impeachment proceedings, and he worked vigorously both before and after the trial to enlist support for Secretary McCulloch and the sound-money policy. One of the most interesting letters in this connection was to Henry Ward Beecher, dated October 10, 1867. He said, in part, 'The great moral question of today is the currency question. Capitalists, speculators, middlemen are stealing the share of annual produce which under natural law belongs to labour, by the use of false money. . . . Have you studied the matter? It needs your attention.' "

<sup>16</sup> It was over the change in editorship of "The Independent" and its consequent problems that the adultery charge against Beecher was made by Theodore Tilton.

<sup>17</sup> Lyman Abbott, *Henry Ward Beecher*, p. 338.

<sup>18</sup> John R. Howard, *Patriotic Addresses*, p. 168 (Pilgrim Press, Chicago, 1887).

His journalistic efforts at Indianapolis show his interest in nature. He gathered his information from firsthand observation as well as from such works as Loudon's encyclopedias of horticulture and agriculture. When he settled in Brooklyn he purchased a farm on the Hudson which he called *Boscobel*.<sup>19</sup> His farm afforded relaxation as well as an outlet for his interest in scientific agriculture.

"I would not for all the comfort which I might get from the books of the Alexandrian Library, or from the Lenox Library, give up the comfort which I get out of nature. Nature, now that I have had the revelation of God which interprets it to me, I would not give up for anything. I had almost said I would rather lose my Bible than to lose my world."<sup>20</sup>

His close observations of nature show up in his only novel, *Norwood*, a book which, by the way, shows his careful study of Walter Scott. While Beecher as a novelist does not rank with such clergymen as Charles Kingsley and Ian Maclaren, the scenes of New England life depicted in *Norwood* are beautifully done and help to keep the book on library shelves. Beecher received \$25,000 for writing the book which appeared serially in "The Ledger." If he had not made his living primarily as a preacher he might have turned to letters. Beecher's *Star Papers* are well written and are frequently quoted. Of his *Life of Christ* Lyman Abbott said, "As an interpretation of the life, character, and teachings of Jesus Christ, it occupies a unique place in that library of 'Lives of Christ' which the nineteenth century produced."<sup>21</sup>

Beecher's interest was so wide as to include the theatre and its people. Ellen Terry speaks of her friendship for the Beechers.<sup>22</sup> Henry Irving, Edwin Booth, Dion Boucicault were numbered

<sup>19</sup> Wm. C. Beecher and Samuel Scoville, *Life and Letters of Henry Ward Beecher*, p. 198. Charles L. Webster and Co., New York, 1888.

<sup>20</sup> *Yale Lectures* (3rd ser.), p. 106.

<sup>21</sup> Lyman Abbott, *Henry Ward Beecher*, p. 348. Cf. A. B. Penniman, "The Contribution of Mr. Beecher to Literature," *Henry Ward Beecher As His Friends Knew Him*, p. 70 (Pilgrim Press, Chicago, 1904).

<sup>22</sup> Ellen Terry, *The Story of My Life*, p. 519 (New York, 1904).



among Beecher's friends. His preaching displayed much histrionic power and Anna de Bremont in writing for "The Theatre" in 1887 said: "In Mr. Beecher the stage suffered a great loss as the pulpit enjoyed a gain."<sup>23</sup>

Beecher's preaching was greatly enriched by his interest in art. This appreciation, incidentally, shows his freedom from the puritanical shackles that bound him in his youth.<sup>24</sup> The *Star Papers* for 1855 contain three essays by him on his experience in the Louvre, in the Luxembourg Gallery, and in the London National Gallery. In a letter written from Paris in 1850, he is enthusiastic about the new world that has opened to him.

"Ah, what a new world has been opened to me! And what a new sense within myself. I knew that I had gradually grown fond of pictures from my boyhood. I had felt the power of some few. But nothing had ever come up to a certain ideal that had hovered in my mind; and I supposed that I was not fine enough to appreciate with discrimination the works of the masters. To find myself absolutely intoxicated—to find my system so much affected that I could not control my nerves—to find myself trembling and laughing and weeping, and almost hysterical, and that in spite of my shame and resolute endeavour to behave better,—such a power of these galleries over me I had not expected."<sup>25</sup>

At Beecher's death a catalogue of books and art objects and oriental rugs was prepared for the auction which was necessary. One year he used for his lyceum address a lecture on "Uses of the Beautiful." Once he declared, "God is a God of beauty; and

<sup>23</sup> Anna de Bremont, Vol. IX, p. 246.

<sup>24</sup> This point is brought out in this quotation. "I find a great many persons who say, 'I do not much enjoy going to church, but if I am permitted to wander out into the fields, along the fringes of forests, and to hear the birds sing, to watch the cattle, and to look at the shadows on the hills, I am sure it makes me a better man.' Some others, like my dear old father, would say, 'That is all moonshine; there is nothing in it, no thought, no truth, and no doctrine of edification.' But there *is* truth in it. There are minds that open to spiritual things through that side of their nature more readily and easily than through any other."—*Yale Lectures* (1st ser.), p. 57.

<sup>25</sup> *Star Papers*, 1855, p. 57.



beauty is everywhere the final process.”<sup>26</sup> His Brooklyn home was filled from basement to attic with art treasures.

His interest in music was as intense as his interest in art. He had installed a huge organ in his church, at the time one of the largest in America. For years this organ was presided over by John Zundel, the composer of “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling.” In 1855, the hymn book, known as *The Plymouth Collection*, the pioneer of a large class of similar books, was published by Beecher. Due to a misunderstanding with his publishers, his name did not appear on the fly-leaf as editor of a smaller, earlier collection known as *Temple Melodies*. In the *Star Papers* for 1859 there are two articles on organ music.

Like many of his contemporaries, Beecher earned a respectable living from his platform work. Joseph Howard estimates that Beecher earned during his lifetime as a lecturer \$465,000.<sup>27</sup> Lecture managers claimed that they could charge more for the course when he was on it. Two of his most widely heard lectures were “The Reign of the Common People,” and “The Wastes and Burdens of Society.” Mark Twain classed Beecher along with Gough, Nasby, and Anna Dickerson as the foremost platform lecturers of his time. These “were the only lecturers who knew their value and exacted it. In towns their fee was two hundred dollars, in cities four hundred dollars. The lyceum always got a profit out of these four (weather permitting) but generally lost again on the house emptiers.”<sup>28</sup> He received eleven thousand dollars for his eleven weeks’ tour of England in the summer of 1886.<sup>29</sup> In this connection mention should be made of J. B. Pond, Beecher’s lecture manager, who knew his worth and exploited it to the full.<sup>30</sup>

When preaching in the capital of Indiana, Beecher had an opportunity to observe politics at first hand. In his frequent lecture excursions into the country he got to know the political

<sup>26</sup> Cf. “Lecture on Oratory,” Ch. XXIV.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Howard, *Life of Henry Ward Beecher*, p. 627 (New York, 1887).

<sup>28</sup> *Autobiography*, Vol. I, p. 57 (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1924).

<sup>29</sup> For a record of this summer see J. B. Pond, *A Summer in England with Henry Ward Beecher*. Fords, Howard, and Hulbert, New York, 1887.

<sup>30</sup> J. B. Pond’s account of his dealings with Beecher are contained in his essay on Beecher in his *Eccentricities of Genius* (Dillingham, New York, 1900).

sentiments of the nation. His political pronouncements from his pulpit were carefully followed. Had Beecher not been such a prominent preacher he might easily have gone into public office. In 1856, he supported Fremont for the presidency. In 1860, he supported Lincoln, and was largely responsible for Lincoln's appearance in the East during the time of the Cooper Institute address. In 1884, he supported Cleveland for the presidency, and was no small factor in his election. His interest in politics enriched the content of his pulpit utterances. That what he said did not always please his countrymen is seen in this letter of Henry Adams:

"Poor Blaine squeals louder than all the other pigs. Schench, Colfax, Belknap were all nothing to him—Beecher alone can match him. I think Blaine's speech Monday matches for impudence and far exceeds in insolence anything Beecher ever did."<sup>31</sup>

In touching thus upon a few of his activities I hope I have shown that Beecher was a man of action. While his preaching owed most to his personal observations, he had an intense interest in the experience of others recorded in books. His library was one of the finest private collections of his time. It numbered some 15,000 volumes.<sup>32</sup> The literary worker would not be disappointed in his collection of fiction, biography, poetry, and criticism.<sup>33</sup> The student of religion would find familiar material in his large library of theological works and books of a religious

<sup>31</sup> *Letters of Henry Adams*, E. C. Ford, ed., p. 286 (Houghton Mifflin, Cambridge, Mass., 1930).

<sup>32</sup> *Auction Sale Catalogue*. W. S. Searle, "Personality of Henry Ward Beecher," "North American Review," XLCIV.

<sup>33</sup> A suggestion as to Beecher's reading is contained in the following letter by Matthew Arnold to Miss Arnold of his meeting with Beecher, October 28, 1883: "This morning I have been to hear Ward Beecher. Places were kept, and his management of his voice and hold on his audience struck me wonderfully but the sermon was poor. They said he knew I was coming, and was on his good behaviour, and therefore constrained. At the end of the service he came down into the area to see me, gave me the notes of his sermon, said that I had taught him much, that he had read my rebukes of him, too, and that they were just, and had done him good. Nothing could be more gracious and in better taste than what he said."—*Life of Arnold*, Vol. II, p. 226 (Macmillan & Co., London).

nature. And, what is also important, the reader of scientific literature would find such well-known names as Tyndall, Huxley, Agassiz, Spencer, Coombs. Beecher in a real sense acted as an interpreter of scientific truths to laymen. Not at all daunted as were many of his contemporaries by the discoveries of science, he seized upon whatever truths he could, as they emerged from the laboratories, which would make Christianity better understood and practised.

His sermons on Evolution were telegraphed for publication in the Chicago newspapers. At a time when the pulpit was denouncing science, his synthesis of evolution and religion attracted wide attention. The friendship of Spencer and Beecher was based largely upon Beecher's appropriation of the truths of evolution in his preaching.<sup>34</sup>

In many places he pays tribute to the influence of the printed page. In a beautiful essay on "The Duty of Owning Books" occurs the following well expressed sentiment:

"Books are not made for furniture, but there is nothing else that so beautifully furnishes a house. A little library growing larger every year is an honourable part of a young man's history. It is a man's duty to have books. A library is not a luxury, but one of the necessities of life."<sup>35</sup>

He read for three things: "First to know what the world has done in the last twenty-four hours, and is about to do today; second, for the knowledge which I especially want to use in my work; and thirdly, for what will bring my mind into a proper mood."<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps no preacher in the world has had his character so maligned as has Henry Ward Beecher. His name was on the dirty lips of rumour from 1872 until his death, and the wells of suspicion have been stirred up by Paxton Hibben in recent years. Yet, I can not forget that his detractor, Theodore Tilton, fled to Paris and died there, while Beecher for fifteen years after the

<sup>34</sup> David Duncan. Cf. *The Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer* (Methuen & Co., London, 1908).

<sup>35</sup> *Eyes and Ears*, p. 155. This excerpt appeared as a bookplate in an issue of the "Saturday Review of Literature."

<sup>36</sup> Handford, *Beecher, Christian Philosopher*, p. 39 (Belford, Clark and Co., New York, 1887).



charge continued to preach to great crowds at Plymouth Church and throughout the land. It is significant that the chief lawyer for the prosecution was with difficulty prevented from abandoning the case, and the judge who presided at the trial testified to his convictions by presiding eight years later at the meeting held in Brooklyn Academy of Music in honour of Beecher's seventieth birthday. This is no place to debate the pros and cons of this sensational trial but thoughtful people have felt that he was unfairly accused. Proof of his character is seen in the fact that his congregation that had known him for twenty-five years did not ask him to resign during this period; instead, they raised his salary to \$100,000 for the year, to cover the expense of the trial. The church membership did not fall off during these years.<sup>37</sup>

Oliver Wendell Holmes testifies to Beecher's character in his article on "The Minister Plenipotentiary":

"He has the simple frankness of a man who feels himself to be perfectly sound, in bodily, mental and moral structure; and his self-revelation is a thousand times nobler than the assumed impersonality which is a common trick with cunning speakers who never forget their own interests. Thus it is that whenever Mr. Beecher speaks everybody feels after he has addressed them once or twice, that they know him well, almost as if they had always known him; and there is not a man in the land who has such a multitude that look upon him as if he were their brother."<sup>38</sup>

Further evidence of his character is seen in the way he rallied to the support of Robert E. Lee, when he assumed the presidency of Washington College. Of the \$4,300 Mr. E. P. Walton got in New York, Henry Ward Beecher contributed a thousand dollars.<sup>39</sup>

Reference has already been made in passing to Beecher's reputation during his lifetime. When it is impossible to know a speaker's character, reputation often is an instrument of persuasion. Henry Cabot Lodge in his *Early Memories* praises Beecher's speaking:

<sup>37</sup> Lyman Abbott, *Henry Ward Beecher*, Ch., "Under Accusation."

<sup>38</sup> "The Atlantic Monthly," January, 1864.

<sup>39</sup> Douglas Southall Freeman, *R. E. Lee*, Vol. IV, pp. 205, 349, 350-51, 357 (Scribner's, New York, 1935).



"In the evening we went to the Irving dinner for which I came on. Sat near the front between John McCulloch, the actor, and Roosevelt. . . . The dinner was very pleasant. Evarts, Irving, and Beecher spoke admirably. The rest poorly."<sup>40</sup>

There are multitudes of such quotations in the lives of great men. Perhaps no testimony could mean more than one from Phillips Brooks. Posterity has agreed in his praise of Beecher and has ranked him but a little lower than Beecher. The busts of both preachers are found in the Hall of Fame. The two men never met. At the time of Beecher's death, Phillips Brooks said:

"I know that you are all thinking as I speak of the great soul that has passed away, of the great preacher, for he was the greatest preacher in America, and the greatest preacher means the greatest power in the land."<sup>41</sup>

Time has augmented rather than diminished Beecher's reputation. The interest in him is shown by the fact that within the last ten years four books containing biographical and critical material have been published and have found a receptive audience. I refer to Paxton Hibben's *Henry Ward Beecher, An American Portrait*;<sup>42</sup> Constance Mayfield Rourke's *Trumpets of Jubilee*;<sup>43</sup> Lyman Beecher Stowe's *Saints, Sinners and Beechers*;<sup>44</sup> and Lionel Crocker's *Henry Ward Beecher's Art of Preaching*.<sup>45</sup> And one runs across Beecher in the most unexpected places. For example, in a book called *The Writing Art*, a book of excerpts from authors on their craft, I found that the first

<sup>40</sup> Henry Cabot Lodge, *Early Memories*, p. 255 (Scribner's, 1925).

<sup>41</sup> A. V. G. Allen, *Life of Phillips Brooks*, Vol. III, p. 229 (E. P. Dutton, New York, 1901).

<sup>42</sup> Paxton Hibben, *Henry Ward Beecher: An American Portrait* (George H. Doran, New York, 1927).

<sup>43</sup> Constance Mayfield Rourke, *Trumpets of Jubilee* (Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1927).

<sup>44</sup> Lyman Beecher Stowe, *Saints, Sinners and Beechers* (The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, 1934).

<sup>45</sup> Lionel Crocker, *Henry Ward Beecher's Art of Preaching* (The University of Chicago Press, 1933).

statement is by Henry Ward Beecher.<sup>46</sup> In reading Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* we find him referred to as "the apostle in the fancy vest."<sup>47</sup>

We must agree that he was a great preacher because he was a great man. He would have made his mark in any number of different professions. His versatility put him in touch with men in all walks of life. He had apparently unlimited resources. Nothing of value to man was foreign to his interests, and he knew the truth of the remark that the proper study of mankind is man. In the next chapter we will see what type of audience such a personality attracted.

<sup>46</sup> Bertha W. Smith and Virginia C. Lincoln, *The Writing Art* (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931).

<sup>47</sup> Sinclair Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 141 (Doubleday Doran & Co., New York, 1935).

## II

### BEECHER'S AUDIENCE

CONVENTION requires next a treatment of the message, but with Beecher the message was the result of collaboration between the speaker and the audience. Therefore, I shall take up a consideration of his audience. We shall consider first his sympathy with the common people; second, his church building and how it was built to house his congregation so that it would respond to his preaching; and then, a discussion of his effect upon his audience.

The necessity of adjusting the message to the hearers was a central point of Beecher's preaching. No speech is a speech that does not attempt to connect with the interests of the audience. This principle is set forth in his observation:

"There are professors in colleges with gifts at instructing classes, who have no gifts at instructing promiscuous audiences. It is one thing to lead a class along, day by day, opening in successive parts a large subject, and another to project a subject, group it into life form, and set it forth in an hour's time, so that common minds can grasp it, and be entertained withal. But if our disappointed professor was all that it is necessary for a lecturer to be, and the people did not come to hear him, he is in the condition of every young man before the public find him out, a probationer. Let him go again, and a third time, and if then those who came at first do not return, and few others supply their place, instead of charging the town with stupidity, might he not better undergo a process of self-examination? Sometimes the people are smart, and the lecturer stupid."<sup>1</sup>

He decided to make the habits of the common people his life

<sup>1</sup> Henry Ward Beecher, *Eyes and Ears*, p. 105 (Ticknor and Fields, Boston, 1862).



study. Throughout his life he sought to ennoble the middle class of America. Oliver Wendell Holmes detecting this emphasis described Beecher's literary activity as "good natured talking and writing to the great middle class."<sup>2</sup> So it was. In this emphasis, he, no doubt, believed that he had scriptural authority.<sup>3</sup> It is fundamental that we catch this accent because upon it rests Beecher's entire conception of speech composition, which will be taken up in the next chapter on "The Message." For example, in speaking of the use of illustrations, he says, "There is no way in which you can prepare a sermon for the delectation of the plain people, and the uncultured, and the little children, better than by making it attractive and instructive with illustrations."<sup>4</sup> The phrases "plain people," "the common people," "uncultivated people" appear time and again in his *Yale Lectures*, and in his speeches. In his belief in the common people, Beecher mirrored the thought of many thinkers of the nineteenth century. In England, honest John Bright was declaring:

"And whatever may come as a consequence of the state of things in this country, of this we may rest assured that the common people, that the great bulk of our countrymen will remain and survive the shock, though it may be that the crown and the aristocracy may be levelled with the dust."<sup>5</sup>

Belief in the common people was a strong political and social doctrine, finding expression not only in the speeches of orators but in the writings of such authors as Walt Whitman and Wordsworth.<sup>6</sup> Professor James M. Hoppin, who occupied the chair of Homiletics at Yale University, at the time Beecher gave the Yale Lectures, in commenting on Beecher's appeal to the common

<sup>2</sup> "Atlantic Monthly," January, 1864.

<sup>3</sup> Mark 12: 37. Professor James M. Hoppin who held the chair of Homiletics at Yale University in commenting on Spurgeon's preaching said: "He has the prime quality of great preachers, that he speaks to the popular mind; and 'the common people heard him gladly.'" *Old England*, p. 51 (Houghton, Osgood and Co., Boston, 1867).

<sup>4</sup> *Yale Lectures* (1st ser.), p. 163.

<sup>5</sup> Address at Durham, 1843.

<sup>6</sup> Walt Whitman, C. J. Furness, "Address on the Eighteenth Presidency," *Walt Whitman's Workshop* (Harvard University Press, 1928, p. 85); Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads."

people stated: "This is the highest praise to say that a man is a preacher to the common people."<sup>7</sup> Beecher's great English contemporary, Charles H. Spurgeon, similarly attracted the middle class. When Spurgeon was told that Dean Swift had remarked that the upper class was all froth and the lower class all dregs and that there was more religion in the middle class, Spurgeon replied that he was afraid it was true of his own time. Among other preachers, besides Beecher, who stressed the rôle of the common people in the scheme of things were Robertson and Guthrie.<sup>8</sup>

Beecher's concern with the middle class did not mean that he had no friends among the intellectuals and wealthy men of his time. At every important dinner he was sought as the speaker. He addressed the New England Society more times than any other single speaker. At a brilliant farewell dinner to Herbert Spencer, he was the main speaker.<sup>9</sup> His first tour to England in 1850 was in the company of Henry J. Raymond, later president of Vassar.<sup>10</sup> Charles Eliot Norton records in his letters that once when Beecher was in Boston he was invited to their select Dozen Club.<sup>11</sup> Among those who contributed to the volume, *As His Friends Saw Him*, there were Lyman Abbott, Newell Dwight Hillis, Frank W. Gunsaulus, Raymond W. Rossiter, Edward Bok, George P. Fisher, George William Curtis, Oliver Wendell Holmes, a choice group.<sup>12</sup>

He learned much about human nature at first hand. He was a familiar figure on the streets of New York and Brooklyn. His frequent travels as a lecturer, both at home and abroad, helped him to understand the secret windings of the human heart. But he did not stop here. He sought what knowledge psychology could give him. He read Alexander Bain and Herbert Spencer and

<sup>7</sup> James M. Hoppin, "New Englander," XXIX (1870).

<sup>8</sup> In the *Yale Lectures* (1st ser.) Beecher refers to the necessity of reaching the common people in the following pages: 98, 147, 163, 169, 181, 200, 208, 219, 226, 231, 232, 234.

<sup>9</sup> N. D. Hillis, *Lectures and Orations by H. W. Beecher*, p. 312 ff.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Star Papers*, New York, 1855, for account of this trip.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Norton, *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, Vol. I, p. 266 (New York, 1913).

<sup>12</sup> *Henry Ward Beecher, As His Friends Knew Him* (Pilgrim Press, Chicago, 1904).

came to believe in the "totality of man."<sup>13</sup> During his early years he believed that phrenology had much to offer in his study of his fellow men.<sup>14</sup> Paxton Hibben ridicules Beecher's study of phrenology. But I think the following statement shows that Beecher was not caught by the superficialities of phrenology, and that for him it was concerned with physiological psychology: "It is held that the brain cannot be partitioned off into provinces, and there are not external indications of its various functions. I shall not dispute that question with you."<sup>15</sup> He not only studied individuals but he studied people in groups.

His knowledge of group psychology shows in the construction of his church. The taste of the common people as well as the dictates of personal magnetism determined the nature of Plymouth Church. Both the exterior and the interior were unadorned. There were no stained glass windows. (Newell Dwight Hillis following the pastorate of Lyman Abbott had stained glass windows constructed for the church. These windows represent scenes depicting the history of the American people.) The building is rectangular in shape, with no steeple. It was built to seat 2,050, but by folding seats fitted to aisles, and by people standing against the walls it could accommodate three thousand people. The following description by an anonymous writer, in "The Atlantic Monthly" for January, 1867, emphasizes the compactness of the auditorium:

"There is nothing of the ecclesiastical drawing room in the arrangements of this edifice. It is a very plain brick building and the interior is only striking from its extent and convenience. The simple, old-fashioned design of the builder was to provide seats for as many people as the space would hold; and in executing the design, he constructed one of the finest interiors in the country, since the most pleasing and inspiring spectacle that human eyes ever behold in this world is such an assembly as fills this church. The audience is

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Yale Lectures* (1st ser.), p. 90.

<sup>14</sup> For an interesting discussion of the interest in phrenology in the 19th century see E. Douglas Branch, *The Sentimental Years, 1836-1860* (Appleton-Century Co., 1934).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Yale Lectures* (1st ser.), p. 91, also Ch. VIII.



grandly displayed in those wide, rounded galleries swinging up high against the white walls, and scooped out deep in the slanting floor, leaving the platform the vortex of an arrested whirlpool. The speaker was nearly in the centre of his audience. He could be easily seen and heard by everyone."

This effect of standing in the midst of the audience was not achieved by accident. In the *Yale Lectures* he describes how he and the architect went into conference to decide the nature of the building, predicated on its use. In answer to the architect's question as to how Beecher wanted the audience located he said: "I want them to surround me, so that they will come up on every side, and behind me, so that I shall be in the centre of the crowd and have the people surge all about me."<sup>16</sup> When Charles Dickens lectured in Plymouth Church he declared it the best room for speaking in that he had ever visited. In the *Star Papers* for 1859, Beecher decried the practice of constructing a church from the outside in. Just as an operating room for surgery is built for its purpose, so a church should be built for its functions. He detested the pulpit that was far removed from the people, and especially the "swallow's nest" stuck up on the wall which hid the entire man with the exception of his head. In the lectures that follow the reader will see that he protests against its use time and again.

He wanted a platform on which the speaker could stand visible to all in the audience. The following well-known anecdote illustrates so perfectly his views on the matter that it must be included:

"The introduction of platforms has been thought, on the whole, to be a somewhat discourteous thing. I will tell you, if you will indulge me, a little reminiscence of my own experience. In the church where I was a minister there was no pulpit; there was only a platform; and some of the elect ladies, honourable and precious, waited upon me to know if I would not permit a silk screen to be drawn across the front of my table, so that my legs and feet need not be seen. My reply to them was, 'I will, on one condition—that whenever

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ch. XVII, "The Personal Element in Oratory," also Ch. VII.

I make a pastoral call at your houses you will have a green silk bag into which I may put my legs.' If the legs and feet are tolerable in a parlour or in a social room why are they not tolerable on a platform? It takes the whole man to make a man; and at times there are no gestures that are comparable to the simple stature of the man himself. So it behooves us to train men to use the whole of themselves." <sup>17</sup>

Not only should the external conditions of the auditorium be made conducive to the best possible results as far as the speaker was concerned, but the audience should be made comfortable. In these days of air-conditioning, it seems like harking back to the dark ages to talk about the need of ventilation, but the foul air described by Beecher in his *Star Papers* in the auditoriums he encountered in his early days on the platform makes us see how poorly audiences were housed.

"Of ventilation we almost despair. What good will words do, when stench, stupidity, fainting, and half-suffocation do not avail? Only this week, on the 10th of December, we spoke in the hall of one of our best old New England towns, where every person in the room was poisoned by foul air. Nothing fresh could get in, nothing foul could get out. It has been so for several years, and will continue to be so. People in other things sensible, and public-spirited, seem to be infatuated on this subject. Bad air seems to be, if not a luxury, a necessary of life." <sup>18</sup>

The lighting in the auditorium should be governed so as to produce as little irritation on the eyes of the audience as possible. All strong lights at the end where the speaker stands should be avoided. "They are a source of great suffering to many, and of annoyance to all." <sup>19</sup>

Beecher's concern for the welfare of the speaker and the audience was all for the purpose of persuasion. As Professor J. A. Winans suggests, long before psychologists began talking about

<sup>17</sup> *Lecture on Oratory*; see also Ch. XXIV.

<sup>18</sup> *Eyes and Ears*, p. 402.

<sup>19</sup> *Ib.*, pp. 400, 402.

audience suggestibility there were those who knew how to render an audience suggestible. In the course of Professor Winans' discussion, he mentions Henry Ward Beecher, and quotes him:

"People often say, 'Do you not think it is much more inspiring to speak to a large audience than to a small one?' No, I say; I can speak just as well to twelve persons as to a thousand, provided these twelve are crowded around me and close together, so that they touch each other. But even a thousand people, with four feet of space between every two of them, would be just the same as an empty room. . . . Crowd your audience together and you will set them off with not half the effort."<sup>20</sup>

Besides calling attention to Beecher's knowledge and practice of the psychology of the audience, this quotation shows the influence he has exerted upon the theory of public speaking. I shall take this up more in detail in Chapter V. Anna de Bremont, an English observer, notes how Beecher's auditorium was suited to his speaking needs:

"I don't think he was ever heard at his best outside of the Plymouth Church. It was his vantage ground; he had built it up from a little low-roofed meeting-house with a score of benches to an immense church to which thousands flocked on Sunday to listen to his wonderful eloquence."<sup>21</sup>

This auditorium was built so that he could persuade the multitude before him. No speech is successful that does not do something with an audience. In Beecher's words, oratory is *influencing conduct with truth sent home*. Fortunately we have many witnesses to the sending home of his sermons. Beecher wanted his audience to sit elbow to elbow so that he could set them off. He wanted an overt response. Many examples of audience response are recorded in the Beecher literature, but the following description of Lincoln's response to Beecher is especially interesting:

<sup>20</sup> J. A. Winans, *Public Speaking, Principles and Practice*, p. 291 (The Sewel Publishing Co., Ithaca, N. Y., 1915).

<sup>21</sup> "The Theatre," Anna de Bremont, Vol. IX, Jan. to June, 1887, p. 246 (Carson and Comeford, London, 1887).



"Mr. Nelson Sizer, one of the gallery ushers of Henry Ward Beecher's church in Brooklyn, told me that about the time of the Cooper Institute speech, Mr. Lincoln was twice present at the morning services of that church. On the first occasion, he was accompanied by his friend, George B. Lincoln, Esq., and occupied a prominent seat in the centre of the house. On a subsequent Sunday morning, not long afterwards, the church was *packed*, as usual, and the services had proceeded to the announcement of the text, when the gallery door at the right of the organ-loft opened, and the tall figure of Mr. Lincoln entered, alone. Again in the city over Sunday, he started out by himself to find the church which he reached considerably behind time. Every seat was occupied; but the gentlemanly usher at once surrendered his own, and stepping back, became much interested in watching the effect of the sermon upon the western orator. As Mr. Beecher developed his line of argument, Mr. Lincoln's body swayed forward, his lips parted, and he seemed at length entirely unconscious of his surroundings—frequently giving vent to his satisfaction, at a well-put point or illustration, with a kind of involuntary Indian exclamation, "ugh," not audible beyond his immediate presence, but *very* expressive! Mr. Lincoln henceforward had a profound admiration for the talents of the famous pastor of Plymouth Church." <sup>22</sup>

Henry Fowler records in his book, *The American Pulpit*, a most interesting insight into the effect Beecher produced on his audience. It is too long to quote in full, but the effect of suggestion is plainly seen in the following quotation:

"A lady behind me had shown some emotion; but when in portraying the relation between Christ and the sinner, he said, 'Christ stands like a father to his prodigal son, and he says, My son, my son, let the past all be sunk between us, and we will be to each other as in days gone by—you shall love me, and I will love you, and we will live together as we used to do,' her feeling broke over control, and she wept

<sup>22</sup> F. B. Carpenter, *Six Months in the White House with Abraham Lincoln*, p. 135 (Hurd and Houghton, New York, 1867).

aloud. A young Englishman sat by me, who had been prevailed upon to attend church instead of a social circle. His lips quivered in effort to restrain emotion; but it would not do; the tears started from his eyes, he was overcome."<sup>23</sup>

Quite plainly this young Englishman was set off in his emotional release by the woman who sat behind him. Such was the effect of the audience on itself.

Beecher used humour as a device for evoking overt responses in his audience. On one occasion, he declared: "If I can make them laugh, I do not thank anybody for the next move; I will make them cry." Laughter and tears, the two powerful responses a speaker can get from an audience, were studied by Beecher, so that he was a master of them.

He was not content to produce a fleeting impression upon his audience; he wanted, in the words of Coleridge, "to leave a sting behind."<sup>24</sup> He wanted the audience to think over what he had said. In one place he says, the real test of a speech is the way it takes hold of the audience making them discuss it on the way home, making it the subject of conversation days after the lecture has been given.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps no better testimony as to the after-effect of Beecher's speaking could be obtained than the fact that book after book was published with excerpts from his sermons. *Life Thoughts*<sup>26</sup> had sold twenty-five thousand copies in 1858. Another book called *A Treasury of Illustration*,<sup>27</sup> published in 1904, has 675 pages and contains 2,585 illustrations. His sermons had a wide sale. His sermons on *Evolution and Religion*<sup>28</sup> were telegraphed, as I have said, verbatim to the Chicago papers and printed in full. There were many editions of *Star Papers*. There

<sup>23</sup> Henry Fowler, *The American Pulpit*, p. 170 (J. M. Fairchild & Co., New York, 1856). Another record of Beecher's effectiveness is found in the glowing testimony of Michael Pupin, *From Immigrant to Inventor*, pp. 105-108. See also *My Memories of Eight Years* by Chauncey M. Depew, p. 328 (Scribner's, 1921).

<sup>24</sup> S. T. Coleridge, *Literary Remains*, Vol. II, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> See Ch. IX.

<sup>26</sup> Henry Ward Beecher, *Life Thoughts*, compiled by Edna Dean Proctor (Phillips, Sampson and Co., Boston, 1858).

<sup>27</sup> Henry Ward Beecher, *A Treasury of Illustration*, compiled by John R. Howard and T. J. Ellinwood (Revell, New York, 1904).

<sup>28</sup> *Evolution and Religion* (Fords, Howard and Hulbert, 1885).

was enough meat in his sermons to provoke discussion and sale, long after their delivery.

He knew how to get into the lives of his auditors because he studied them. When he went to the Yale Divinity School to lecture on preaching, he devoted one entire lecture to "A Study of Human Nature." In this lecture he condemns the school of preachers whom he calls the "Dogmatic School": a school of preachers that hands down from one generation to the next a pre-existent system of truth, which has no bearing upon the lives of people. The preacher should begin with problems of living, of conduct, as they exist in the audience:

"Now the school of the future is what may be called the Life School. This style of preaching is to proceed, not so much upon the theory of the sanctity of the Church and its ordinances, or upon a pre-existing system of truth which is in the Church somewhere or somehow, as upon the necessity for all teachers, first, to study the strengths and the weaknesses of human nature minutely; and then to make use of such portions of the truth as are required by the special nature over the animal or lower side."<sup>29</sup>

One of the most successful preachers of our own day, Harry Emerson Fosdick, reiterates the principle that the preacher should study human nature and having found the needs of men preach to them. Fosdick's use of the word "dogmatically" echoes Beecher's thought.

"When a preacher has got hold of a real difficulty in the life and thinking of his people and is trying to meet it, he finds himself not so much dogmatically thinking for them as co-operatively thinking with them."<sup>30</sup>

Something should be said about Beecher's audience outside his church, his reading public.<sup>31</sup> Such volumes as *Lectures to Young*

<sup>29</sup> *Yale Lectures* (1st ser.), p. 77.

<sup>30</sup> "Harper's Magazine," July, 1928.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. John Howard "Mr. Beecher As Author and Editor" in *As His Friends Knew Him*, p. 57. Lyman Abbott, *Henry Ward Beecher*, Ch. XIV, "Editor and Author," p. 328.



*Men* (1845), *Star Papers* (1855), *Life Thoughts* (1858), *Eyes and Ears* (1862), *The Crown of Life* (1890), *Beecher As a Humorist* (1888) indicate that an eager audience bought and read what he published.

His novel, *Norwood*, before it was written, was sold for \$25,000. I understand that this is a good price for a novel even today. One publisher asked permission to send him a check for \$20,000, if he would only promise to begin his autobiography. So great was the demand for his written word that the "Christian Union" had a circulation of 90,000 a week. And, of course, his reading public helped to build up his listening audience. His sermons were published every week under the title, "The Plymouth Pulpit," and were sold from newsstands all over the world. For example, here is a record of an Englishman in Yorkshire reading one of Beecher's sermons:

"Last summer I entered the neat cottage of an intelligent mechanic in the heart of Yorkshire, and found him quite enthusiastic over one of Mr. Beecher's sermons. Seizing the opportunity to draw out a disinterested opinion in such a place, and from such a man, I asked him brusquely why he spent his precious time in reading 'that fellow's sermons,' instead of Liddon's and Stanley's and Spurgeon's, which were published in the same periodical. He replied like a philosopher: 'Ah, sir, I read those, too; but it seems to me that the great object of Mr. Beecher's life is the upbuilding of man, and I always read his first, for I think him the greatest preacher living.'"<sup>32</sup>

Beecher's concern for his audience did not stop with an interest in the external conditions conducive to attention. His sermons show how he tried to employ materials and techniques calculated to arrest and hold the attention of his audience. The collaboration of the preacher and audience in the production of the message will be apparent as we take up the next phase of the study.

<sup>32</sup> Lyman Abbott and S. B. Halliday, *Life of Henry Ward Beecher*, p. 287.

### III

#### BEECHER'S MESSAGE

EVERY successful artist, working directly and immediately with the public, has to collaborate his own ideas and emotions with the idea and emotions of his audience. This collaboration may be done in the privacy of the study or it may be done on the platform. Dramatists, such as Maxwell Anderson, confess that it is their problem to strike a compromise between the world without and the world within.<sup>1</sup> As Maxwell Anderson has said, "A certain cleverness in striking a compromise between the world about him and the world within has characterized the work of the greatest as well as the least of successful playwrights; for they must take an audience with them if they are to continue to function."<sup>2</sup> So intense was Beecher's desire to join his ideas with those of the audience, that he would not compose except in their presence. In his "Address to Students" (1886) he declared, "An audience puts me in possession of every thing I have got."<sup>3</sup> Frequently he would change his theme when he came face to face with his audience, because the original subject did not seem to fit this particular audience. He said that often as he rose to pray, his eyes would fill with tears as he saw some person in the audience who was in need of spiritual help. Because of his close adaptation to the needs and responses of his audience, Dr. Stalker characterized Beecher's preaching as "psychological insight."<sup>4</sup>

Beecher's practice of composing in the presence of his audience

<sup>1</sup> This is reminiscent of Wordsworth's thought expressed in *The Prelude*, Book XIII:

"Which do both give it being and maintain  
A balance, an ennobling interchange  
Of action, from without and from within;  
The excellence, pure function, and best power  
Both of the objects seen, and the eye that sees."

<sup>2</sup> "New York Times," October 6, 1936.

<sup>3</sup> See Ch. XVIII.

<sup>4</sup> James Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models*, p. 166 (New York, 1891).

is not unusual. Other orators employ it. William E. Borah described his speaking as follows:

"With reference to political speeches in political campaigns or with reference to discussions in the Senate, I do no more than make a skeleton outline of the line of argument I wish to pursue. I do not undertake to reduce such speeches to manuscript form. Many of my speeches which have been most satisfactory to me I have prepared in a few hours. I think it is quite accurate to say that the manuscript is practically unknown in my speaking. Furthermore, I should say that even the skeleton outline referred to above is generally forgotten after I begin my speech. I try to get the subject and the outline of the subject and the objective thoroughly in my mind, and all preparations are with a view of doing this rather than with an idea of having something before me to follow."<sup>5</sup>

In such extemporaneous speaking, matters of style, kinds of material, and types of organization are influenced by the reactions of the audience.

In Beecher's manner of composition we see his genius. While it permitted him the exercise of his powers it would spell the doom of lesser men. In the years of his greatness he never allowed himself to put on paper his outline or his thoughts until the hour just preceding the sermon.<sup>6</sup> He claimed that he was afraid that

<sup>5</sup> Letter to the author, November 5, 1935.

<sup>6</sup> But this was not always his method. As a young man he wrote out his sermons and kept a careful record of them. "Here he began a habit which he followed during the first ten years of his ministry, that of keeping a record of every sermon preached. Stating the date, text, and outline of the sermon, and then the reasons why he preached that particular sermon, 'as giving a kind of guide to my course by a perusal of what I have done, also to avoid repetition and to show *why* I made given sermons'; thus forming the habit of preparing his sermons with a view of reaching some specific object. This record with his daily journal in which he jotted down such thoughts on religious subjects as came to his mind day by day, are now before us, and show an immense amount of painstaking care. His habit of careful analysis was of incalculable value to him later, giving a logical method to his reasoning. It was not until after he came to Brooklyn that, under the increased pressure of this larger field of work, he abandoned the habit. . . . The last recorded sermons we find were those preached the morning and evening of January 5, 1848."—Wm. C. Beecher and Rev. Samuel Scoville, *Biography Henry Ward Beecher*, p. 179 (Charles L. Webster Co., New York).



inspiration in the pulpit would be killed by a too early crystallization of his thought. He never spoke on a theme that had not lain in his mind for a long time. He preferred to turn the thought over and over in his mind. When it was ripe he spoke on it but not until it was ripe. In his graphic manner he describes his practice:

"I have a dozen or more topics lying loose in my mind through the week; I think of one or another as occasion may serve, anywhere, at home, in the street, in the horse-car. I rarely know what theme I shall use until Sunday morning. Then, after breakfast I go into my study as a man goes into his orchard; I feel among these themes as he feels among his apples, to find the ripest and best. The theme which seems most ripe I pluck; then I select my text, analyze my subject, prepare the outline and go into the pulpit to preach it while it is fresh."<sup>7</sup>

This method of improvisation explains many points of Beecher's rhetorical theory, such as his theory of sermon organization, his use of illustrations, his theory of style. His concern for his audience and his manner of composition dictated the type of arrangement he employed. Composing in the presence of his audience prohibited closely knit plans. The structure of his speeches was the result of the interaction of speaker and audience upon each other. He felt that this was true of the preaching of St. Paul:

"Romans derives its structure full as much from what the Jews were as from what Paul was. It was an argument of persuasion aimed at the peculiarities of his countrymen. Abstract thought in which order follows logical association was not his method. Like a surgeon, he watched the face and pulse of the patient at every motion of the knife."<sup>8</sup>

Beecher wanted a plan that gave freedom, a plan that could be elongated or telescoped at will, a plan that permitted the insertion

<sup>7</sup> Lyman Abbott, *Henry Ward Beecher*, p. 118 (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1904).

<sup>8</sup> Lyman Abbott, *Henry Ward Beecher*, p. 423 (New York, 1904).

or excision of material that would hold the attention of the audience and influence its conduct.

Beecher's arrangement was psychological rather than logical. Fosdick has declared that the psychological approach can make or unmake a sermon. "I often find that this contrast between a merely logical and a vitally psychological arrangement of thought can make or unmake a sermon."<sup>9</sup> We discover that Beecher's lectures addressed to lyceum audiences are a series of facts or a series of parables. He believed that large bodies of people follow thought when it is presented in a loosely connected form. "The Wastes and Burdens of Society" and "The Reign of the Common People" use this type of development. Beecher adds to our knowledge of the instruments of persuasion—a knowledge which was gleaned from long years of experience before audiences, when he said: "The greatest number of men, particularly uncultivated people, receive their truth by facts placed in juxtaposition rather than in philosophical sequence. Thus a line of facts or a series of parables will be better adapted to most audiences than a regular unfolding of a train of thought from the germinal point to the fruitful end."<sup>10</sup> Here, as in all rhetorical problems, Beecher takes into account his audience. This type of organization suited perfectly his method of improvisation. If he felt that the predetermined line of attack was not holding attention, it was simple to take another approach. He had no fear that such a practice would disturb the symmetry of his sermons, for he preached for the ennobling of men rather than the salvation of sermons. As J. F. Dobson said of Demosthenes, so we might say of Beecher: "A good speech was to him a successful speech, not one which was to be admired by critics as a piece of literature."<sup>11</sup> And what Dobson says of the arrangement of Demosthenes' speeches could be equally said of the structure of Beecher's speeches:

"We find, indeed, that he regularly has some kind of exordium and epilogue, but in the arrangement of other

<sup>9</sup> Fosdick, "Animated Conversation" in *If I Had Only One Sermon to Prepare*, Edited by J. F. Newton, p. 110 (Harpers, 1932).

<sup>10</sup> *Yale Lectures* (1st ser.), p. 219. See Ch. VI.

<sup>11</sup> J. F. Dobson, *The Greek Orators*, p. 240 (Methuen & Co., London, 1919).

divisions of the speech he allows himself perfect freedom; we cannot reckon on finding a statement of the case in one place, followed regularly by evidence, by refutation of the opponent's arguments, and so forth. All elements may be interspersed, since he marshals not in chronological nor even, necessarily, in logical order but in such an arrangement as seems to him most decisive. He is bound by no conventional rules of warfare, and may leave his flanks unprotected while he delivers a crushing attack on the centre."<sup>12</sup>

Now a rhetorical instrument, which Aristotle called one of the two means of proof, admirably suited to Beecher's method of improvisation was the illustration. He conscientiously set out to improve his command over this implement. His command of this device was not only to characterize his own preaching but was destined to influence American preaching.<sup>13</sup> The following quotation shows Beecher's study of the illustration and suggests his concern for the instruments of persuasion:

"I can say for your encouragement, that while illustrations are as natural for me as breathing, I use fifty now to one in the early years of my ministry. For the first six or eight years, perhaps, they were comparatively few and far apart. But I developed myself in that respect; and that, too, by study and practice, by hard thought, and by a great many trials, both with the pen, and extemporaneously by myself, when I was walking here and there. Whatever I have gained in that direction is largely the result of education."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> J. F. Dobson, *The Greek Orators*, p. 253 (Methuen and Co., London, 1919).

<sup>13</sup> Louis Brastow, *Representative American Preachers*, p. 115, has commented on Beecher's influence: "From the early period and on into the first quarter of the nineteenth century, American preaching was largely doctrinal in its subject-matter, logical in form, and philosophical in spirit. It has ceased to be doctrinal and logical in the formal sense. Church doctrine no longer constitutes its subject-matter and dialectic is no longer the instrument of defence. But in the broad sense of the term it has never ceased to be philosophical when at its best, and the demand for a reasonable interpretation of religious truth has not ceased, nor has it greatly diminished; it has been modified. To this modification in the didactic type of American preaching Mr. Beecher, equally with Dr. Bushnell, has been powerfully tributary."

<sup>14</sup> *Yale Lectures* (1st ser.), p. 175.



The one outstanding characteristic which every critic of Beecher mentions, his felicitous and abundant use of the illustration, was not a gift but the outgrowth of study and practice.

Twenty-five years and more of observation are behind Beecher's lecture on the illustration which he gave at Yale Divinity School. Nowhere in the history of rhetoric will one find a more complete enumeration of the uses of the illustration than here. We see as we list the uses of this instrument of persuasion that Beecher had his audience in mind. The twelve uses mentioned by him are: 1. narration; 2. explanation; 3. proof; 4. ornament; 5. attention; 6. memory; 7. humor; 8. imagination; 9. provide for various hearers; 10. bridge difficult places; 11. educate people to use illustrations and thus be "led into the truth"; 12. rests audience by providing variety.<sup>15</sup> Nine of these uses have been discussed by other rhetoricians, who have interested themselves in the illustration, but three of them appear to be original deductions by Beecher: that the illustration provides for various hearers, that it rests the audience, and that it assists the speaker to say indirectly what would be indiscreet to say directly, or bridges difficult places.

Style for Beecher was effective oral expression. Beecher was not a writer but a speaker. When he speaks of clearness he speaks of it as a speaker thinks of it—as immediate intelligibility.

"I know some men, among whom I think was Coleridge,<sup>16</sup> who justify the obscurities of their style, saying that it is a good practice for men to be obliged to dig for the ideas they get. But I submit to you that working on Sunday is not proper for ordinary people in church, and obliging your parishioners to dig and delve for ideas in your sermon is making them do the very work you are paid a salary to do for them."

<sup>15</sup> See Ch. XIV.

<sup>16</sup> Beecher may have had reference to Coleridge, *Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other English Poets*, Ed. T. Ashe, p. 520 (Bohn, London, 1883). "The reader of Milton must always be on his duty; he is surrounded with sense; it rises in every line; every word is to the purpose. There are no lazy intervals; all has been considered, and demands and merits observation. If this be called obscurity, let it be remembered that it is such as a compliment to the reader; not that vicious obscurity which proceeds from a muddled head."

In this humorous way Beecher emphasizes the difference in requirements between the oral and written style. Other qualities of style touched upon by him are simplicity, grace, ease, accuracy, and purity. All these qualities must be considered in relation to public speaking, not to writing. For example, in speaking of sound and rhythm in style he says, "He should have an ear for strong and terse, but rhythmical sentences which flow without jolt and jar."<sup>17</sup>

There is no objection to long sentences if the meaning is perfectly clear as the speaker proceeds. But the public speaker has no use for sentences conceived and executed in the library.

"Above all other men, the preacher should avoid what may be called a literary style, as distinguished from a natural one; and by a 'literary style' technically so called, I understand one in which abound these two elements—the artificial structure of sentences and the use of words and phrases peculiar to literature and not to common life. Involved sentences, crooked, circuitous and parenthetical, no matter how musically they may be balanced, are prejudicial to a facile understanding of the truth. Never be grandiloquent when you want to drive home a searching truth. It is foolish and unwise ambition to introduce periphrastic or purely literary terms where they can possibly be avoided."<sup>18</sup>

As with his sentences, his choice of words depended on the effect he desired. His vocabulary for the most part was the current vernacular. His *Yale Lectures* are filled with such expressions as "to get the go-by," "to turn up one's nose," "to cuff about the controversies of theology," "to set-off an audience." Occasionally, when greatly moved, Beecher becomes poetic, as in the following passage from his eulogy of Lincoln, which has been used many times in textbooks on public speaking as an example of rhythmical prose.

"Four years ago, O Illinois, we took from your midst an untried man, and from among the people. We return him to

<sup>17</sup> *Yale Lectures* (1st ser.), p. 229.

<sup>18</sup> *Ib.*, p. 229.

you a mighty conqueror. Not thine any more, but the nation's; not ours but the world's. Give him place, O ye prairies! In the midst of this great continent his dust shall rest, a sacred treasure to myriads who shall pilgrim to that shrine to kindle anew their zeal and patriotism. Ye winds that move over the mighty places of the West, chant requiem! Ye people, behold a martyr whose blood, as so many articulate words, pleads for fidelity, for law, for liberty."<sup>19</sup>

Thus we have seen how his rhetorical theory has been influenced by the nature of his audience. Let us look at his thought-patterns and see how they reflected the concepts of his audience.

Beecher's concern with the needs of his people precluded theological discussions from the Plymouth Pulpit. It was not because he was ignorant of theology that he shunned it but because he felt that theological disputation was so futile. It did not save men's souls. It did not help men to live better lives here and now. How could the doctrine of "total depravity" help men to love each other and God? In a sermon he declared: "I would not for all the world make my nest in the doctrine of total depravity. It would be like lying on a bed of thorns." If men sinned there was help in God's Spirit ever at work and in Christ, the way and life. His preaching was not based on Calvinism, the theology of his English contemporary Spurgeon.<sup>20</sup> He tried to work out his own theology based on cause and effect, which shows his scientific reading.

"Your sermons must be philosophical in principle and thoroughly thought out. You must acquire the habit of thinking, of looking at truth, not in isolated and fragmentary forms, but in all its relations; and of using it constantly as an instrument of producing good. You see I do believe in the science of theology, though I may not give my faith to

<sup>19</sup> N. D. Hillis, *Lectures and Orations by Henry Ward Beecher*, "Abraham Lincoln," p. 283.

<sup>20</sup> In answer to the question "Is it not true that Spurgeon is a follower of Calvin? and is he not an eminent example of success?" Beecher answered: "In spite of it, yes; but I do not know that the camel travels any better, or is any more useful as an animal for the hump on its back."—*Yale Lectures* (1st ser.), p. 102.



any particular school of it, in all points. But no school can dispense with a habit of thinking according to the laws of cause and effect, for that is absolutely necessary.”<sup>21</sup>

Beecher trusted experience rather than other men's speculations about man and his relation to God.

What was Beecher's attitude toward some of the central ideas of the Christian religion? He exalted the love of God. All other attributes were subsidiary. In concluding his first series of *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, he has a lecture on “Love, the Central Element of the Christian Ministry.” He emphasized God's love, forbearance, and mercy. He knew God through Jesus, through man, and through nature.

Of Jesus, he declared: “Let us see Jesus as Paul and John saw Him, with the eye of love and not of the intellect.” He believed that Jesus manifested God in the flesh, possessed of all human susceptibilities—“tempted like as we are yet without sin.”

On the point of inspiration of the Bible, he expressed the thought that “The race has evolved the Bible, not the Bible the race, except in later days. . . . Revelation was a historical fact outside the Bible, before it was a recorded fact in the Bible.” The distinction between Revelation and Inspiration is this: “Revelation is the making known of things which were unknown to those who receive them. Inspiration is a divine action upon the human soul, which leads a man to make known things or to do things which otherwise he would not say or do.”

All questions as to how prayers of mortals can change the pre-ordained plan of One who sees the end from the beginning, and is “the same yesterday, today, and forever,” Beecher sweeps away by saying that “with the *how* we mortals have nothing to do. God will take care of His decrees without our assistance, and we need not be anxious about His immutability. It is enough to know that prayer is required, that prayer is a privilege.” He held that the assurances of God, that prayer is answered, are too precious and too direct to be lost amidst metaphysical entanglements about God's sovereignty. He reasoned that prayer is revealed not only through the Bible as a mighty power for good in human affairs, but also through the experience of thousands of

<sup>21</sup> *Yale Lectures* (1st ser.), p. 141.

Christians. Prayer should be not only an expression, but a state of mind. "It should be the prevailing posture of our souls."

Suffering was solved in his philosophy by stating that the facts of this world show in the first place, that our faculties have a double constitution, they are capable of good and evil; in the second place, destruction is as plainly written on the outward world as life is; in the third place, pleasure and pain are invariable concomitants, and the more an animal enjoys, the more it suffers; and in the fourth place, it must be borne in mind that all this immensely intensified elaboration of this life is to fit us for another existence. Thus we see the effect of his audience on his thinking. His audience did not care for logical processes and he made no attempt to give logically built-up discourses in his pulpit.

In striving to evolve his own philosophy, Beecher did not find much help in the "selfish system" of William Paley, which bases the distinction between right and wrong on the principle of self-interest. Nor did he find much help in Locke's philosophy, which makes no distinction between the Reason and the Understanding. He believed in the absolute idea of right, in distinction from the impulse of self-interest, and in regard to the supremacy of the pure reason and innate moral nature, he set forth man as being responsible for his acts, being possessed of a natural conscience. Beecher believed that decisions are made by the heart. If the heart is right, if it is pure and true, our decisions will be right. Men use the head to hunt up reasons for decisions already made by the heart. His audience made up as it was of common folk helped to determine the kind of material he used. Other orators have made their appeals to the emotions rather than to the intellect, as is witnessed by Wickham Steed's appraisal of Stanley Baldwin.

"His appeal is almost always to the feelings, not to the insulated intellect; and he is most moving when the brains of his hearers are completely switched off so that they can revel undisturbed in the luxury of emotions which they themselves might have been unwilling or unable to express."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Wickham Steed, *The Real Stanley Baldwin*, p. 141 (Nisbet & Co., London, 1930).

To those who did not understand, or care to understand, Beecher's deliberate attempt to speak to the heart was held up to derision. The following criticism appearing in "The Boston Daily Courier" for February 14, 1861, bears the stamp of an unsympathetic listener:

"Mr. Beecher's popularity is due to the fact that he never reasons, that he makes no demands upon the intellectual faculties of his hearers, and so for great numbers of our people, he is an easy and agreeable man to listen to. For minds not trained to reasoning nothing is so irksome as to listen to reasoning. They hate argument but appeals to their emotions and passions meet with great favour at their hands. So they are led away by plausible and agreeable babblers like Mr. Beecher."

Of course Beecher was open to just such criticism but we can be sure that it did not trouble him, for he realized as Cicero knew of old that "Mankind make far more determinations through hatred, or love, or desire, or anger, or grief, or joy, or hope, or fear, or error, or some other affection of mind, than from regard to truth, or any settled maxim, or principle of right, or judicial form or adherence to laws."<sup>23</sup> We must remember that Beecher in defining oratory spoke of "influencing conduct" and not inducing belief. Persuasion not conviction was his aim.

Whatever touched man's relationships with his brothers and with God was pulpit material. In a sermon entitled "The Sphere of the Christian Minister" occurs the following passage which gives his views on the scope of his pulpit:

"When ministers meddle with practical life, with ethical questions and relations, they are meddling with just what they do understand,—or ought to. If they do not understand these things, they have failed to prepare themselves for one of the most important functions to which they could address themselves. . . . A man may preach politics too much. A man may do it foolishly. So a man may administer a bank foolishly."

<sup>23</sup> *De Oratore*, tr. J. S. Watson, Book II, Ch. XIII (New York, 1860).



Slavery with all of its political connotations became one of the major themes of his ministry, when he took up his work in Brooklyn. Not only in the pulpit but in the press he expressed his sociological views. His first contribution to "The Independent" singled out the main points of Clay's Omnibus bill and was entitled "Shall We Compromise?" which was published on February 21, 1850. In this quotation we get a taste of his incisive thought and style: "Slavery is right; slavery is wrong. Slavery shall live; slavery shall die. Slavery shall extend; slavery shall not extend." This editorial was read to Calhoun, then on his death bed, and he said, "That man understands the thing, he will be heard from again."<sup>24</sup>

He thus became the mouthpiece for large portions of the American people. His interest in the world about him is seen in his political activity; and his utterances were largely a compromise between his and their thinking.

In 1854, Beecher advocated that rifles should be sent along with other provisions such as money, furniture, and food to Kansas which was being settled through "squatter sovereignty." These rifles became known as "Beecher Bibles." In 1856, he took an active part in the Republican party's advocacy of Fremont for president. In his article in "The Independent" for June 26, 1856, entitled "On Which Side is Peace?" he presents the major issues of the campaign. James Buchanan won the election but Beecher and many other leading Republicans believed that Fremont was elected, but "counted out" in the returns from Pennsylvania, a state whose large number of electors determined the election. In October, 1859, a group of young men of Plymouth Church invited Lincoln to appear on their lyceum course. For some reason the lecture was not given in Plymouth Church but was finally given under other auspices in Cooper Institute on February 27, 1860. The importance of this speech is now history. On the occasion of this visit to New York, Lincoln went with a crowd to hear Beecher. I have already referred to Lincoln's impression of Beecher's preaching on this occasion.<sup>25</sup> A friendship had its inception here, which had its climax in Beecher's being asked to give the speech at the raising of the flag at Fort

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Patriotic Addresses*, edited by J. R. Howard, p. 167.

<sup>25</sup> *Supra*, p. 30.

Sumter on April 14, 1865. In 1860, he became an ardent advocate of Lincoln's candidacy and was a potent force in his election. Despite Beecher's criticism of the administration of the first two years, he was one of the President's most ardent supporters. For two years, Beecher urged the emancipation declaration as the only permanent because the only just foundation for peace. But Lincoln could not go faster than public opinion would sustain him.<sup>26</sup>

In 1863, Beecher's lectures in England at Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Liverpool, and London were largely political in their effect. Historians disagree as to their effect on the government's policy but nonetheless he helped to change the sentiment of the common people from one of open hostility to the North to one of understanding. Nowhere is his knowledge of governmental and economic forces more clearly shown than in these five speeches. They are the climax of his thinking on slavery for more than thirty years.

Beecher was one of the leaders who desired a friendly spirit shown toward the South after the Civil War. He believed that the freed men should be given every opportunity to improve themselves. He contributed, as we have seen, to the support of the struggling Washington College, of which Robert E. Lee was the president, when there were those Northerners who thought Lee was not a fit person to be president of a college.

Beecher supported Grant for the presidency in 1868 and 1872. His eulogy of Grant given in Tremont Temple, Boston, October 22, 1885, is one of his noblest pieces of oratorical prose. Beecher,

<sup>26</sup> F. B. Carpenter, *Six Months in the White House with Abraham Lincoln*, p. 231 (Hurd and Houghton, New York, 1867): "During the brief period that the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher was editor-in-chief of 'The Independent,' in the second year of the war, he felt called upon to pass some severe strictures upon the course of the administration. For several weeks the successive leaders of the editorial page were like bugle-blasts, waking the echoes throughout the country. Somebody cut these editorials out of the different numbers of the paper, and mailed them all to the President under one envelope. One rainy Sunday he took them from his drawer, and read them through to the last word. One or two of the articles were in Mr. Beecher's strongest style, and criticized the President in no measured terms. As Mr. Lincoln finished reading them, his face flushed with indignation. Dashing the package to the floor, he exclaimed, 'Is thy servant a *dog* that he should do this thing?' The excitement, however, soon passed off, leaving no trace behind of ill-will toward Mr. Beecher; and the impression upon his mind by the criticism was lasting and excellent in its effects."

an independent Republican, stepped out of his party to vote for Cleveland in 1884 as a protest against the lack of reform within his own party. Many of his congregation opposed him in his stand. When it was all over and the Republicans had lost, one of the most brilliant and effective Republican workers in Plymouth Church said, "It cut me to the soul that he was so wrong; but when it comes to denying his influence, that is simply absurd. We never worked so hard in our lives as we did to counteract him in this thing; but the effect of his personality and his power was evident on every side."

Beecher's chief aim in speaking was the ennoblement of man. Whatever touched man in any way was a fit subject for him to lecture and preach upon. To preach for forty years in one pulpit necessitated unlimited resources. One can not but agree with Abraham Lincoln, who is recorded to have said to the Rev. Henry M. Field, "he thought there was not upon record, in ancient or modern biography, so *productive* a mind, as had been exhibited in the career of Henry Ward Beecher!"<sup>27</sup> Yet Beecher was not an original thinker and he will not be remembered by posterity for any contribution to theology, political science, literature, or any other branch of learning he touched. He will be remembered as an orator, who could attract and hold large audiences and "influence their conduct with truth sent home by all the resources of the living man."

<sup>27</sup> F. B. Carpenter, *Six Months in the White House with Abraham Lincoln*, p. 136 (Hurd and Houghton, New York, 1867).



## IV

### BEECHER'S TRAINING FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING

UNLIKE his great younger pulpit contemporary, Phillips Brooks, who held elocution teachers more or less in contempt, Beecher did not disdain the services of those who could teach him how to use his voice, how to gesture, and how to improve his posture. And it should be said that, judging from all accounts, he was incomparably the better in delivery. In the lectures that follow, it will be noticed that time and again he refers with affection to his professor of elocution, John Lovell, to whom reference has already been made. In these lectures there is much refutation of the idea that training in public speaking is unnecessary. He and his brother Charles used to make the woods ring on Walnut Hills with their vocal exercises, as they went back and forth to class at Lane Seminary in Cincinnati.

Beecher has much to say about the importance of the study of delivery in his *Lecture on Oratory*, which was given as a commencement address before the National School of Elocution and Oratory in Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup> In answer to the objections of those who thought that training in delivery was unnecessary, he reduced the situation to an absurdity, and replied: "But suppose a man should stutter, and you should tell him to go into his closet and be filled with the Holy Ghost, would it cure his stuttering?" He believed so thoroughly in training in action, that he devoted one entire lecture of twenty-five pages to the subject in his *Yale Lectures on Preaching*.<sup>2</sup>

Once, when Henry Clay visited Amherst College, some of the students presented him with a Bible. The one chosen to make the presentation speech was Henry Ward Beecher, for he was the best speaker in college. He relates that he practised public speaking from the time of his Sophomore year in college. His rhetorical powers always showed to best advantage when there was opposi-

<sup>1</sup> See Ch. XVII.

<sup>2</sup> See Ch. XIII.

tion. In other subjects, such as mathematics and languages, he never tried to know much. In the auction, then usual at the close of the college year, his copy of *Conic Sections* was put up as a "clean copy with the leaves uncut." But he was not indolent by any means. He was always reading, and making observations for his debating and lecturing. It was in preparation for his debates on the question of African colonization, as has been pointed out, that the conviction of the human rights of the Southern slaves first came to him.

As a student he went about the countryside, giving lectures on temperance and phrenology. He often walked to save the fare. With the travelling expenses of one lecture, ten dollars, he purchased a much-desired set of Burke, which became at once the envy of his classmates.

Something has already been said of his interest in phrenology. This subject is important because it helped him in his attempt to know mankind. This interest developed early in his college career as he was a roommate of Fowler. Harriet Beecher Stowe tells of her brother's forming a club at Amherst to pursue research. The club desired to study anatomy but gave it up when the difficulty of securing suitable subjects arose. The club did fit up its room, Mrs. Stowe records, with charts, busts, and books. The works of Combe, Magendie, Spurzheim, and Gall, and the other Scotch metaphysicians were purchased. This interest later led him to purchase many of Spencer's books. It will be remembered that early in his career Spencer was a devotee of phrenology. But Spencer led Beecher to a psychological understanding of man that had a firm foundation. In the *Yale Lectures* several references to Herbert Spencer will be found.

The textbooks on rhetoric which he studied at Amherst College throw much light upon his rhetorical training. The students of rhetoric were required to study Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric*, George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, and Hugh Blair's *Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. These texts are classics in the field of rhetoric. Another book, which was on the required list, and which is not so well known today, was S. P. Newman's *Practical System of Rhetoric*. Newman was professor of rhetoric at Bowdoin College. He shows a thorough acquaintance with the rhetorical tradition, and owes, especially, a debt to Blair and

Campbell. Newman's text was very popular during the middle of the last century, passing through sixty editions in thirty years. Newman has a section dealing with the imagination as a creative process, treating it as an idealization process in the manner of the neo-classicists, which, I have no doubt, is the source of Beecher's ideas on the imagination that occur in the *Yale Lectures on Preaching*. As a student at Lane Seminary, where his father was president, he was required to pursue a course in sacred rhetoric.

In addition to the rhetorical training which he received in the classroom, he devoted much attention to the subject all during his life. His library contained the works of Cicero, including the *De Oratore*. Demosthenes' orations were also on his shelves. One can imagine with what avidity he studied Herbert Spencer's essay on "The Philosophy of Style." Beecher's own rhetorical theory reflects the influence of the principle of economy of the auditor's attention, set forth in Spencer's essay. When Beecher states that the illustration should be used because it rests the attention of the audience, he is but applying this principle. Also, in what he says about the choice of words, that they should be mainly Anglo-Saxon, the influence of Herbert Spencer is apparent.

Indirectly, if not directly, he knew of Aristotle's rhetoric. By his study of Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric*, and the other textbooks studied in college, he would have been pointed to Aristotle. It is hard to believe that such a student of rhetoric would have left untouched Aristotle, whom Whately called the greatest of the systematic writers on rhetoric. In his practice of rhetoric, Beecher shows that he thought of rhetoric in the Aristotelian sense. He conceived, evidently, of rhetoric not as teaching persuasion but as the faculty of finding all the available means of persuasion in a given case. In stating that the illustration helps the speaker to say in a roundabout fashion what would be inexpedient to say bluntly, Beecher reveals that he thought of rhetoric as the art of appearance.

In addition to the rhetoricians already mentioned, he knew the essay on style by Buffon. But "Style is the man," as a definition of style, was rejected by Beecher for his purpose, because it does not contemplate an audience. I find no explicit reference to De Quincey's essays on language and rhetoric, but I presume that



Beecher was acquainted with them. De Quincey's works were listed in the *Auction Sale Catalogue* of Beecher's library. Beecher's remark on the nature of the sentence for oral discourse is similar to De Quincey's distinction between the style of Dr. Johnson and Burke. The concept of style set forth by De Quincey, that style is the embodiment of thought, was not wholly adequate for Beecher. Style for him had to contemplate an audience. In speaking of style as the embodiment of thought, both De Quincey and Beecher use the word "embodiment." The concept of style which suited Beecher concurs with Stendhal's definition of style, which J. Middleton Murry gives as satisfactory to himself.<sup>3</sup>

William Cowper's letters were the model of style set by Beecher for his son to emulate. He states that the sermons of Robert South were helpful to him in developing a good style. From Milton, he gained a conception of power and vigour. He said of Milton's influence: "If I were to read this week in some of the nobler writings of John Milton, you would hear the trumpet sounding next Sunday in Plymouth Church." From Burke, he claimed he learned how to be fluent, and from Barrow, he learned how to handle the adjective.

"Ordinarily, adjectives are the parasites of substantives—courtiers that hide or smother the king with blandishments—but in Barrow's hand they became a useful and indeed quite a respectable element of composition. Considering my early partiality for Barrow, I have always regarded it a wonder that I escaped so largely from the snares and temptations of that rhetorical demon the adjective."

He was also a profound admirer of the genius of Shakespeare. The name of Shakespeare occurs more frequently upon the pages of Beecher than the name of any other one author. He was not long on the memorization of quotations, and so Ellen Terry's record comes with double force. She was a staunch friend of the Beecher family. In her biography, she tells of having lunch with Henry Ward Beecher and Henry Irving. During the course of the conversation, Beecher recited long passages of Shakespeare.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 205.

Both actors agreed that Beecher would have done well on the stage as a Shakespearean actor. Shakespeare's power over words was undoubtedly studied by Beecher.

He often read for words. He studied to have an adequate vocabulary to serve him when he stood composing in the presence of his audience. "How can you bear such turgid 'fine writing'?" a friend asked. Beecher replied, "It's a gorgeous vocabulary, and I want it." Such a practice was worth while, for he declared one day: "Words—when I am well started, I don't need to hunt for words! They come in crowds, getting in one another's way, and each one saying, 'Take me! take me!'" Beecher's wide vocabulary was not a matter of chance.

Mention has been made of his study of illustrations. However, not too much attention can be given to this instrument of persuasion, when we are considering Beecher, because it was his chief tool in speaking. Young speakers might well follow his example of cultivating the use of the illustration. I repeat for the sake of emphasis his remark: "I can say that while illustrations are as natural to me as breathing, I use fifty now to one in the early years of my ministry. . . . Whatever I have gained in that direction is largely a result of education."

In an account of his rhetorical training, the influence of his father, who was one of the most distinguished clergymen of his generation, must not be omitted. As a boy he sat under his father's preaching. The following anecdote may serve to illustrate his father's rhetorical influence: "I recollect a case in which my father at a public meeting was appointed to draw up an article. He had written 'It is wrong.' Someone in the meeting got up and moved in this enthusiasm that this be corrected and that the sentence read, 'It is exceedingly wrong.' My father got up and said in his mild way, 'When I was writing out this resolution in its original shape that was the way I wrote it; but to make it stronger, I took out the exceedingly.'" In mastering the technique of his profession, he very naturally turned for instruction to other pulpit orators. He steeped himself especially in the sermons of Jonathan Edwards to learn the secret of his power. Although Beecher was out of sympathy with the theology of Edwards, he admired the way he handled his themes. From Edwards, he learned that the aim and plan of the sermon should

proceed from the needs of the congregation. He was always alert to discover what other masters of pulpit discourse could teach him about the fine points of his profession.

The pen chastened his style. He usually managed to edit a paper along with his pulpit duties. In Indianapolis, as has been said, he edited the "Western Farmer and Gardener." When he got settled in Brooklyn, he began contributing to "The Independent." He became editor of "The Independent" in 1861 and held the post for two years. In 1870, he assumed the editorship of "The Christian Union." Under him, the circulation grew to 90,000 issues. His novel *Norwood* and his *Life of Christ*, two sustained pieces of writing, unquestionably developed his skill in the use of language.

What Beecher says in the *Yale Lectures* about the oral style comes out of his own rich experience. There is no greater contrast in the history of any orator's progress in the mastery of English than is shown in Beecher's use of English in his *Lectures to Young Men* (1845) and in the *Yale Lectures*. In the *Lectures to Young Men* he strains for effect, he tries to employ every rhetorical device taught in the textbooks. The reader's attention is caught by the way a thing is said rather than by the thing said. In the following sentence one can almost see the young Beecher searching for words with the *p* sound. "Let not this vagabond prostitute pollute any longer the precincts of the church, with impudent proposals of alliance." And in the following sentence the figure is so strong that it in itself arrests attention. "Shall such astounding iniquities be vomited out amidst us, and no man care?" Every sentence in these lectures could be cited as sophomoric. But when Beecher reaches his prime, his sentences go straight to the mark. He knows the value of his advice: "Don't whip with a switch that has leaves on, if you want to tingle."

Proof of his interest in the study of composition and delivery is seen in his various attempts to tell others what he had found out about the art. The lectures by him contained in this book are evidences of his own serious desire to discover the ways and means of influencing conduct.

A rhetorical truth that he learned as a young man, undoubtedly the most important truth that a public speaker ever learns, is



that material must meet the needs of the audience. An account of this lesson first occurs in *Eyes and Ears* (1862). It is substantially repeated in many of the lectures in this book. It has been quoted so many times in textbooks on public speaking that it is fairly well known. The account concerns his discovery that the Apostles were successful in their preaching because they began with the experience of the audience and addressed their remarks to the wants of the audience. He states that he went through the Scriptures and found about forty of these, what he terms, "you all knows." The rhetorical principle discovered by him is referred to in present-day textbooks on public speaking, as the *reference to experience* or *getting on common ground*.

Genius may be inscrutable, and therefore ordinary mortals are grateful for whatever light may be thrown upon their path as they ascend to lesser heights. It is not often that an orator leaves so many traces of his rhetorical training as Beecher left. From a study of these traces it is evident that his success was not all unpremeditated. He was partly self-taught and partly a product of textbook teaching.

## BEECHER'S INFLUENCE ON THE ART OF SPEAKING

IN the library of the Union Theological Seminary, New York City, there hangs a framed sermon plan in Beecher's own handwriting. What rhetorical influence this has had upon generations of young preachers it is, of course, impossible to conjecture. Yet, the very fact that this sermon plan, typical of Beecher's extemporaneous style, is accorded such a conspicuous and influential place is significant and at the same time symbolic of the position he has come to occupy in the halls of rhetorical learning in America. Further evidence of his influence on the pulpit is found in a textbook on preaching by Professor Ozora Davis, late president of the Chicago Theological Seminary. This book contains one of Beecher's sermons in full and is used as a teaching model for beginners in the art of preaching. Such evidence of rhetorical influence can not be lightly ignored. Let me present other signs which indicate the important place Beecher has assumed as a model of platform excellence.

Not only by theological schools has the Plymouth pastor been singled out as a model, but we find that in the college classroom his place is secure alongside such models as Demosthenes and Cicero, Burke and Brougham, Patrick Henry and Hamilton. Each of these masters seems destined to be remembered by one masterpiece. Likewise, Beecher made a bid for enduring rhetorical influence with his "Liverpool Address," which, I shall show, has been used time and time again for rhetorical purposes. I hasten to remark, however, that Beecher's rhetorical influence is not confined to this one effort.

George Pierce Baker is responsible for the prominent place occupied by Beecher's masterpiece in textbooks on argumentation. In 1895, Baker included this address in his *Specimens of Argumentation*, and discoursed at length upon it in his *Principles of Argumentation*. Beecher's address, Baker pointed out, illustrates the use of several rhetorical principles. It exemplifies the

use of analogy by definition. It illustrates the use of the *reductio ad absurdum* form of argument. The address also illustrates, Baker showed, the intermingling of conviction and persuasion. It would be difficult to find important books on argumentation, from Baker's time to the publication of *Argumentation* by Winans and Utterback in 1930, that do not refer, in one way or another, to Beecher's supreme masterpiece. O'Neill, Laycock, and Scales borrow the treatment of Baker and Huntington's revised edition and improve upon it, so that today it is the best rhetorical treatment accorded to this address.

Although, as I have said, the "Liverpool Address" is Beecher's most remarkable contribution to the body of rhetorical example, it is by no means the only one. Other speeches of the English series are frequently referred to by rhetoricians. F. B. Robinson in *Effective Public Speaking* calls attention to the masterly exposition of States Rights in the "London Speech." Lockwood and Thorpe in *Public Speaking To-day* refer to the "Manchester Speech" for illustrative purposes. C. P. Lindsley in an article in the "Quarterly Journal of Speech" (Vol. VII) cites some of the rhetorical values to be found in the various addresses of the English series. Rhetoricians, while calling attention especially to the "Liverpool Address," add that all the speeches of this series will repay careful study for rhetorical values.

Not for one moment must one think that Beecher's rhetorical influence is limited to these speeches, delivered under such extraordinary circumstances in 1863. His earliest important publication, *Twelve Lectures to Young Men* (1845), has served as a convenient source of illustration for F. B. Robinson in his book already mentioned. Paragraphs from Beecher's lecture "On Gambling" are quoted by him to illustrate the skillful handling of details and movement within the paragraph. Of the same series of lectures, E. D. Shurter uses a portion of "The Cynic" as an example of direct address. Algernon Tassin found excerpts of this address suitable material to include in his book of literature for interpretation. The rhetorical vitality of Beecher is recognized, when it is remembered that these lectures are nearly one hundred years old.

Before turning to a consideration of his influence by precept, let me add that frequently his use of words and his handling of



the sentence have served for rhetorical example. Professor E. O. Haven in a text on rhetoric quoted a portion of one of the *Star Papers* (1855) to illustrate the use of irony. Sandford and Yeager, in a recent textbook, quote a portion of one of Beecher's sermons to exemplify the "You and I" relationship so essential to conversational speaking. R. Harwood Pattison in his book on preaching cites Beecher to illustrate the exact choice of words. Many of the Yale lecturers quote Beecher as an authority. Rapid movement in sentence structure and the development of the paragraph by repetition are illustrated by selections from Beecher in *A Modern Composition and Rhetoric* by Smith and Thomas. George Herbert Palmer in his *Self-cultivation in English* gives wide circulation to Beecher's challenge to grammar: "Young man, when the English language gets in my way, it doesn't stand a chance."

In the realm of language, Beecher has come to the attention of John Earle and H. L. Mencken. Earle calls "at that" an Americanism and states that he first found it in the published sermons of Henry Ward Beecher. Mencken discovered the word "hellion" in a sermon by Beecher and called it a contribution to the American language from the backwoods pulpit.<sup>1</sup>

Another important suggestion as to his rhetorical influence comes from Constance Mayfield Rourke, who, in her *Triumphs of Jubilee*, has recorded a parallel between Walt Whitman and his great Brooklyn neighbour. Miss Rourke points out that Walt Whitman and Beecher were friends. They saw a great deal of each other. Whitman was closely identified with the columns of a Brooklyn newspaper, which found much to quote from Beecher's emotional outbursts. It would not be strange if the gray poet fell under the mystic sway of the chants that were uttered in Orange Street. Professor Vernon L. Parrington, in his dramatic analysis of the attack of realism upon the romanticism of an earlier age, thinks enough of Miss Rourke's parallel to speak of it as an important contribution to Walt Whitman's literature.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that Bliss Perry, in his *Walt Whitman*, pointed out that his rhythms were those of

<sup>1</sup>H. L. Mencken, *The American Language*, p. 140 (Knopf, New York, 1936).

oratorical prose and suggested that Ingersoll might have served as his model. It is just as likely that Henry Ward Beecher may have exerted an influence in this direction. Think of that lovely heart throb which concludes the address delivered from the Plymouth pulpit the Sunday morning following Lincoln's assassination. "Four years ago, O Illinois, we took from your midst an untried man, and from among the people, etc." This and its companion sentences are imbedded forever in the pages of American literature. It would be difficult to find more noble prose even in Whitman. This passage has frequently found rhetorical employment. Woolbert's revised version of *Fundamentals of Speech* includes it.

Not only by example, but by precept does Beecher commend himself to students of rhetoric. His *Yale Lectures on Preaching* have already become a classic source of rhetorical inspiration and guidance. John A. Broadus, James A. Winans, E. D. Shurter, A. S. Hoyt, and W. N. Brigance, among others, find much quotable material in the lectures. These rhetoricians have acknowledged their indebtedness to Beecher, and have plainly and generously indicated that he exerted a considerable influence upon what they have said. Brigance, Shurter, and Broadus quote liberally from his treatment of the illustration, which is, I might say, the best discussion of this instrument of persuasion to be found in the history of rhetoric.<sup>2</sup> Beecher's remarks on sentence structure are frequently referred to. He is quoted by Winans, on the nature of extemporaneous speaking. And in many other ways, Beecher has been consulted on questions of rhetorical import.

It is safe to say that if it had not been for Henry Ward Beecher, the series of lectures known as the *Yale Lectures on Preaching* would never have come into existence. The lectureship was founded by Henry W. Sage for the express purpose of providing his pastor, Henry Ward Beecher, with the opportunity of describing his own theory and practice of preaching. The excellent lectures on preaching of Phillips Brooks, as well as those of other great preachers, might never have been given to the world.

Yet, the name of Phillips Brooks, Beecher's great Boston contemporary, does not appear half so often upon the pages of

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *A Treasury of Illustration by Beecher*, edited by Howard and Ellinwood (Revell, 1904).

rhetorical treatises as does that of Beecher. None other of the Yale lecturers of this series has made such a place for himself in the pages of the history of rhetoric. Testimony as to Beecher's influence upon the preaching of his time is seen in the following quotation appearing in the "New York Daily Tribune" at the time of his death: "He not only emancipated religious thought, but he even gave direction to current methods of preaching. He showed what power could be exercised by extemporaneous preaching, when it came from a full heart and a well-equipped mind." Louis Brastow, in an essay on Beecher, states that Beecher stood at the crossroads of the break between the early nineteenth century dogmatic, doctrinal, argumentative preaching and the illustrative, expository preaching of our own day. He was well known and widely read in England. He gave two lectures on preaching in 1886. After hearing him, a prominent English clergyman said that the clergy of England went home to prepare the man rather than the message. Not only has the pulpit felt his influence but in classes in public speaking the name of Beecher is uttered in the same breath and with the same respect as the names of Chatham and Choate, Gladstone and O'Connell, and the long list of eminent English and American orators.

In addition to the *Yale Lectures*, there is his *Lecture on Oratory*, delivered in Philadelphia in 1876. His definition of oratory already given suggests his stand on several rhetorical matters. He said: "I define oratory to be the art of influencing conduct with truth sent home by all the resources of the living man." This emphasis on the *truth* keeps alive the Platonic conception of rhetoric. The phrase *sent home* emphasizes that rhetoric looks to communication as its aim. Oratory for Beecher was not merely speaking well, thus disagreeing with the definition given by Quintilian. Method for Beecher was not the sum and substance of oratory. The entire man was to be called upon in oratory. Science and art were to be combined. In this he is Ciceronian.

Portions of this lecture have had generous rhetorical acceptance. Professor Irvah Winters quotes that portion which deals with voice production. The refutation of the "Be Natural" theory is used by Professor James A. Winans. Many portions of the lecture are quoted by Professor R. D. T. Hollister.



Beecher's rhetorical influence is salutary. His theory is the result of blending his own broad experience with a careful study of the past masters of rhetorical theory such as Blair, Campbell, and Whately. He was an excellent student of rhetoric and belles lettres at Amherst, and he continued his study of rhetoric at Lane Seminary. Like Aristotle, he approaches all the problems of rhetoric with the audience in mind. No rhetorical theory was satisfactory, that did not contemplate the level of the audience to be reached.

In conclusion, it is to be noted that Beecher is growing in rhetorical importance. In writings of the decade just passed, more references to his rhetorical theory are to be found than in the preceding decade. Seventy years after the delivery of the "Liverpool Address," it is referred to by Winans and Utterback as the stock example of persuasion before a hostile audience. Sixty years after the delivery of the *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, the rhetorical influence of this classic is greater than it was thirty years ago. Indeed, Beecher occupies the unique position of being America's only preacher-rhetorician worthy to take his place alongside those great English preacher-rhetoricians Blair, Campbell, and Whately.

## VI

### BEECHER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE THEORY OF SPEAKING

IN viewing Beecher's rhetorical theory against the backdrop of time, it is discernible that he made two distinct contributions to man's knowledge of the instruments of persuasion. Both are in the field of extemporaneous speaking. The rest of what he says on the theory of composition can easily be traced to the observations of others. It is true, however, that he often states the truth in such a manner as to make it almost his own; but the discovery of the instrument had been made before.

Because he had the reputation of cooking up his sermons in the hour preceding his appearance in the pulpit, his friends were doubtful of his ability to appear on a lectureship at a great university. Would he not make the judicious grieve? Indeed, the outline of his first lecture at Yale came to him while shaving. And it is precisely because he held true to form and lectured about the only kind of composition he was interested in, that his lectures are of value.

He makes it clear that extemporaneous preaching, the name he gave to his type of preaching, was not preaching offhand. Careful filling up of the stores of material had to precede speaking in the pulpit. But the actual creation of the sermon had to take place in the midst of the congregation. The fusing of the material was to be brought about in the fires of inspiration as they glowed, not in the study but in the pulpit.

Everything dealing with the composition of the sermon was approached by Beecher from the angle of composing in the presence of the audience. De Quincey once proposed showing what influence the printing press had upon composition. In his *Yale Lectures*, Beecher set out to show what influence speaking in the presence of the audience had upon composition. The problems of invention, arrangement, and style are different when met in the study and when encountered in extemporaneous speaking.

To tell here what Beecher said about all such differences would make too long a story. However, I think it would be interesting to point out what contributions he made to the theory of extemporaneous preaching.

In two ways, vital or not depending upon the point of view, he increased man's knowledge of the instruments of persuasion employed in extemporaneous preaching. As has been said, because of the demands upon his time, he developed the dangerous (at least for most men) practice of preparing his outline in the hour preceding his preaching, and then clothing this outline in the hour of preaching. No one in an hour can make an elaborate brief. Elaboration takes time. It makes little difference whether Beecher indulged in rationalization, in saying that the common people, whom he desired to reach, were repelled by closely knit sermons. The fact remains that at the height of his career he habitually preached to three thousand people every Sunday morning, using an outline prepared in the hour preceding his appearance in the pulpit. He claimed that the cultivated few in any congregation enjoy the unfolding of the sermon step by step. This is an æsthetic appreciation which the uncultivated, who make up most of the congregation, do not possess. A series of parables or a line of facts is best suited to the multitudes.

In reviewing his own practice, he came to feel that this theory of loose organization was the best suited to the classes of society at which he aimed. As far as I have been able to ascertain, Beecher makes a contribution here to our knowledge of the instruments of extemporaneous preaching. No rhetorician has ever described this type of organization before. True, it has been employed. Russell Conwell, in his *Acres of Diamonds*, given more than six thousand times, mostly to the common people, relied upon it. Talmage in his *Big Blunders* used the series-of-parables form of organization. Spurgeon, another preacher to the masses, employed this loose type of organization. Some of the values of this form of organization are that it can be contracted or expanded at will, the climax is in no certain place, no one point has to precede the other for an accumulative effect, the speaker can give his attention to winning the audience rather than to saving his outline.

Of course, sermons preached upon such an organization could



not stand the unimpassioned scrutiny of a Monday morning. Beecher seldom read his printed sermons. He did not believe that the standards of literary excellence, permanency, and felicity, should be applied to sermons. Sermons were tools that had work to do. Man had to be regenerated. He replied to his critics, "What do you want? You do not want an argument for the sake of an argument. You do not want a sermon that is as perfect a machine as a machine can be, unless it does something." Utility is the first consideration in sermon-making.

The second contribution which he made to the theory of extemporaneous preaching grows directly out of the first. If one will thumb through such a modern text as W. N. Brigance's *The Spoken Word*, he will be surprised to find so many references to Beecher. Most of the material under the illustration is matched by matter in Beecher. E. D. Shurter found the way to Beecher in the matter of illustrations before Brigance did. And before Shurter, Professor A. S. Hoyt in his manual *The Work of Preaching* generously borrowed from Beecher. However, antedating these gentlemen by many years, the revised edition of John A. Broadus on *The Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* acknowledges the worth of Beecher on illustrations.

I believe it can be shown conclusively that Beecher contributed to man's knowledge of this means of persuasion. It will be recalled that Aristotle classed examples as one of the two sources of proofs. For Aristotle proof was the only use of the illustration. Cicero and Quintilian accept this dictum and add nothing to it. Up to the time of the *Yale Lectures*, other writers on rhetorical problems such as Blair and Campbell and Whately add that clearness is one of the uses.

Beecher was greatly admired for his use of illustrations. In fact much of the preaching of today, which is largely illustrative in character, might be traced to him. Lyman Abbott, who followed Beecher in the pulpit at Plymouth Church, says: "Beecher's illustrations were not ornaments attached to his discourse like fringe upon a garment; they were woven into it, a part of its web and woof, so that, in general, it was impossible to remember the illustration without remembering the truth which it illustrated." Broadus classes Beecher with Chrysostom, Jeremy Taylor, Christmas Evans, Chalmers, and Spurgeon, as an em-

ployer of illustration. This abundant use of illustration can be seen at once if one will pick up a volume of his sermons. Beecher's sermons do not outline well. They do not make good models for a book of speech composition.

In 1872 he gave the first of the series of the *Yale Lectures*. Even such a biographer as Paxton Hibben admits that these *Yale Lectures* were the best output of Beecher. In this first series Beecher went into the subject of illustrations more completely than any other recorded rhetorical writings on the subject. John A. Broadus, one of the most influential of writers on homiletics, composed his first edition, which I have already mentioned, in 1870.

Now I wish to show that in the revised edition of *The Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, brought out in 1897, Broadus used some of the material on illustration given by Beecher. Of Broadus's book, Hoyt Hudson, of Princeton University, has said, "There are not many alive today who could move through the works of the masters so surefootedly as does Broadus. It is a treatise undertaken by one who felt the responsibility of mastering a subject before he wrote." The following columns will indicate the borrowing of Broadus:

A.	B.	C.
1870 Broadus	1872 Beecher	1897 Broadus
1. explain	1. explain	1. explain
2. prove	2. prove	2. prove
3. ornament	3. ornament	3. ornament
4. impress	4. impress	4. impress
	5. arouse attention	5. arouse attention
	6. assist memory	6. assist memory
	7. introduce humor	
	8. stimulate imagination	
	9. provide for various hearers	
	10. bridge difficult places	
	11. educate people to use illustrations	
	12. rest audience by providing variety	

Broadus admits taking numbers five and six in column C from Beecher's discussion. Notice, however, that there are yet six

more uses of the illustration mentioned by Beecher in column B which were not adopted by Broadus. Of course, these uses are not mutually exclusive but it will be admitted on the other hand that they do help toward discrimination. Such discrimination might be of incalculable aid to the sophomore who has to be impressed with the might of illustrations.

Professor J. A. Winans in a letter to me has extolled Beecher's treatment of the illustration. A. E. Phillips has written me, "Beecher in the lectures themselves, and in his sermons and speeches is an excellent example of the happy use of illustration, and perhaps in this way made more of a contribution than in his chapter on the subject." A typical quotation from Beecher's discourse on illustration is the following taken from Shurter's *The Rhetoric of Oratory*:

"An illustration is a window in an argument, and lets in light. You may reason without an illustration; but when you are employing a process of pure reasoning and have arrived at a conclusion, if you can then by an illustration flash back light upon what you have said, you will bring into the minds of your audience a realization of your argument that they can not get in any other way."<sup>1</sup>

How many teachers are there who have used the expression "Illustration is a window" without knowing where it came from!

Any public speaker will find Beecher on the illustration good reading. It will be stimulating and suggestive. He may have the assurance at the same time that he is at one of the sources of information concerning the use of the illustration.

<sup>1</sup> *Rhetoric of Oratory*, E. D. Shurter, p. 115 (Macmillan Co., New York, 1909).



## VII

### CHURCH AUDITORIUMS AND SPEAKING <sup>1</sup>

WE are all acquainted with auditoriums that are not adapted to the purposes of speaking and the hardships they impose upon the public speaker. One of the reasons for Beecher's success at Plymouth Church was the perfect adjustment of his physical surroundings to his purpose. What he says on the construction of buildings for the purposes of public speaking should interest not only public speakers but architects and committees, who have the erection of buildings for speaking purposes in charge. The Protestant Church is built around the personality of the preacher and everything in the construction of a church should radiate from that consideration.

When a church is to be built, the question usually is from the outside to the inside, and not from inside to out. It is not said: "Here are a thousand people; in our system of worship the effects to be produced require such and such conditions for the congregation, and the church building must go up around these uses and be but an instrument of them." It is much more often the case that the question takes this form: "Where shall we put it? How high shall the steeple be, and how fine can we afford to make the interior?" Then when these questions are settled, it is also, incidentally, a matter of consideration how to seat the people, and whether the building can be made available for hearing. As to the pulpit, but one thing is usually considered necessary, and that is, that it should be put as far as possible from all sympathetic contact with the people to be influenced by it; that it should be so constructed as to take away from the speaker, as far as can be done, every chance of exerting any influence upon those whom he addresses. Therefore the pulpit is ribbed up on the sides, set

<sup>1</sup> From *New Star Papers*, New York, 1859. The ideas expressed here are repeated in part in the *Yale Lectures* and in the *Lecture on Oratory*, 1876.

back against the wall, where it looks like a barn swallow's nest plastered on some beam. In this way the minister is as much as possible kept out of the way of the people, and all that is left is his voice. Posture, free gesture, motion, advance or retreat, and that most effective of all gestures, the full form, of an earnest man, from head to foot, right before the people; in short, the whole advantage which the body gives when thrown into argument or persuasion, are lost without any equivalent gain. In this sacred mahogany tub or rectangular box, the man learns every kind of hidden awkwardness. He stands on one leg and crooks the other, like a slumbering horse at a hitching post; he leans now on one side of the cushion, or lolls on the other side. And when a man, thoroughly trained by one of these dungeon pulpits to regard his legs and feet as superfluous, except in some awkward and uncouth way to crutch him up to the level of his cushion and paper, is brought out upon an open platform, it is amusing to watch the inconvenience to him of having legs at all, and his various experiments and blushing considerations of what he shall do with them!

Is it any wonder that so little is done by preaching, when, in a great church, with a small congregation, so scattered that no two persons touch each other, the bust of a man, peering above a bulwark, reads a stale manuscript to people the nearest of whom is not less than twenty-five feet from him? The wonder is that anything is ever accomplished. Daniel Webster is reported to have said that no lawyer would risk his reputation before a jury if he had to speak from a pulpit, and that he considered the survival of Christianity in spite of pulpits as one of the evidences of its divinity. We do not vouch for the truth of this as an anecdote, but we indorse it as a truth of philosophy.

## VIII

### PHRENOLOGY: HOW TO MAKE PREACHING HIT <sup>1</sup>

**A**FTER one reads the following essay by Beecher on what he understood by the word phrenology we see that he has the same concept in mind as is expressed by the word psychology today. If we remember that psychology is a word and science of comparatively recent origin, and that like all sciences it has had vague and doubtful beginnings, we will not call Beecher a phrenologist and condemn with a word. In saying that phrenology "includes within its circle the nature, condition, and habits of the human mind as far as they are known," he is giving a fairly accurate definition of psychology.

In regard to this matter of Phrenology, a few words may not be amiss.

1. When *we* employ the term Phrenology, it conveys to our mind no such idea as a science of bumps, as it is vulgarly called: nor is it Craniology, or a science of the skull. It is the *science of the mind*. It includes within its circle the nature, conditions, and habits of the human mind, as far as they are known.

The only thing which many people suppose Phrenology to teach is, that mental traits can be discovered by the conformation of the head. But this is its least value. It is not unimportant. It has a degree of use in practical life. But, in the nature of the case, it alone will be serviceable principally in exaggerated and imperfect heads, and doubtful and difficult in proportion as one's mind is generally and evenly developed. Phrenology assumes the brain to be the organ of the mind. It teaches that the brain is not a simple unity, but a congeries of organs; that special faculties employ several special portions of the brain for their manifestation; that the skull, in general, conforms to the brain, and in-

<sup>1</sup> Chapters VIII, IX, X, XI, XII are taken from *Eyes and Ears*, Boston, 1862.



dicates the size of its different parts. But, then, what is the *quality* of the substance of the brain? is it fine and healthy? or is it coarse and flabby? This must be known, also; and it is to be judged by the general appearance of the man, his temperament, skin, muscle, etc. In like manner, the quantity and quality of blood which flows upon the brain and stimulates it, determine the power of action to a certain degree, and this must be judged by the size of the organs of digestion, of aeration, and of propulsion, or, in other words, by the form and perfection of the organs of the *trunk*. The head alone does not indicate character. But the head, the texture of the skin and muscle, the build of the body, and, lastly, the expression of the face, posture, gesture. It takes the whole man to be the proper index of man. And Phrenology, as the science of *the mind*, includes in its circuit whatever the mind uses, and whatever in the human body aids, modifies, or influences the mind. Of course, Physiognomy, Physiology, etc., are, to a degree, included in its limits.

We are far from regarding Phrenology as a completed science. Indeed, we believe that more yet remains to be done than has been done. But adolescent and undeveloped as it yet is, we regard it as incomparably beyond anything which has been regarded as a science of mind.

2. Although a knowledge of Organology, and a certain facility of judging men's nature from the structure, is desirable, yet, if one did not know a single *external* phase of Phrenology, if he accepted its classification and division of faculties, and its laws of combination and activity, he would derive from these more advantage in the use of himself, and in his judgment of others, than could be had from all other systems. And this, chiefly, because the faculties are precise and specific, discriminated one from another, and consonant with the experiences and observations of men in daily life.

We do not say, that to a Phrenologist the human soul becomes clear as crystal; that he can walk about and read men like large printed placards. No such thing! There is great skill required, much experience, careful observation, and even then there will be many mistakes made, and much found that will baffle the most penetrating. All that can be said properly is, that practical Phrenology adds very largely to our stock of knowledge, that it

simplifies many things which in other systems are obscure, that it very materially helps us even when it does not give us the whole, and especially, that it gives us the *right direction* of research, and the right *method*, so that whatever we do read is more likely to be sober truth, than the results of the spider systems of philosophy, in which each philosopher spun his theory in some corner, from the web bag of his own personal consciousness, and left his starved disciples to hang upon it like flies upon cobwebs.

3. The usefulness of Phrenology to a minister of the Gospel is to be settled by asking the question, *Is it beneficial to a teacher and healer of the mind to know what the human mind is, and what are the laws of its action?*

It is a mere impertinence to say that the knowledge of the human mind, or of Phrenology or the science of mind, will not secure a man from mistakes. Nothing will secure a man from mistakes but Death. That settles everything very accurately.

Are not the sciences of Anatomy and Physiology to be studied? and yet the most skillful physician blunders every day of his life. Is there no use in mechanics, because the artisan commits mistakes? Ought not an artist to dissect and study the human structure, because the best instructed students err in drawing?

No man will ever know the human soul so well as to be able to judge rightly, trace skillfully and aim accurately, every time. Man is too vast an organization to be judged as we would a fly. Men, acting in masses, played upon by a thousand diverse influences, changing their fancies every hour, yet under all changes true to some certain ruling impulses; strangely blended with good and evil—good and evil that come and go as the shadows of wind shaken leaves do upon the tremulous waters—are not to be known with the same precision as we know inanimate things, or the simple and constant laws of nature.

But there is a great difference between knowing nothing and knowing something. There is a great benefit, in practical affairs, in a degree of knowledge which is altogether too vague for scientific uses; and no minister of the Gospel can afford to be without a practical knowledge of men, and in gaining that, nothing will aid him more than a use of the materials afforded by Phrenology. And if, when he has done all that he can, he finds

that he is far from a perfect understanding of man in all the mazes of his daily activities, he will still know vastly more than if he had not at all explored the springs of action and the laws of activity.

Our Roman Catholic friend must be simple indeed, if he thinks that the Confessional is the grand means of knowledge. A few overt actions may be found out there. But what does it reveal of the inward states, the multitude of fancies, the swarm of thoughts that spring and spread themselves in an instant the world over, like the rosy flushes of sunset rays, spread through half a hemisphere in a moment, and in a moment retracted and vanished—of all those dark passions that lurk, but never appear—of those moods of mind that have no language, that never form themselves into ideas, and that yet do fever the whole being and change the complexion of thought and purpose?

One might as well suppose that he could learn the whole mystery of generation and life, because he heard the hen cackle when she laid her egg, as to suppose that the priest knows the human soul, because the thief told of his theft and the murderer his crime.



## IX

### THE LECTURE SYSTEM

THE lecture system is not as prominent a feature of American life today as it was in Beecher's time. Yet there is some activity along this line of public education. Aside from the historical interest of his remarks, his comment on the necessity of making the lecture so meaty that it will be discussed later is important and needs constantly to be kept before the public speaker. His job is not finished when he steps off the platform. The principle of adaptation to the needs of the audience is brought out again. The necessity of collaboration with the audience is emphasized in this lecture.

Those disconsolate persons who live in dread of every breeze that brings a ripple to the surface of a community, and who have been especially afraid of this system of popular lectures which has so suddenly grown up and into such strength, have fresh occasion for alarm. The demand for lectures was never so strong and earnest as now. Feeding does not satisfy it. The number of able lecturers every year increases. The arrangements for lectures have assumed something of the stability of institutions. The places where lectures have prevailed longest are the very ones where the interest is keenest. It must be given up, then, as a thing past recall, and lectures will henceforth be ranked as a part of our necessities. Is there no consolation for these sad-eyed and disconsolate persons? We think there is, and much.

Every lecturer has an opportunity of hearing an expression of opinion respecting those who have preceded him, and I have been struck with the general truth of the judgments formed, and the evidences afforded of good sense and critical sagacity among the common people. Men find their level in this walk of life as much as in the professions. The people are reasonably content with plain sense; they are better pleased with sound sense dressed with learning or ample experience. If to this is added wit and

fancy, they repay all that with proper appreciation. And if the whole be inspired with a deep moral impulse, and breathe the breath of a noble heart, everyone recognizes that too.

It will probably be the testimony of all who lecture, that every year audiences grow more difficult. In other words, every winter's course educates their critical judgment and their taste. They require abler performances. They can less easily be imposed upon by brilliant tricks or learned dullness. And we were never so sure as now, that the most popular lecturers are those who deserve to be so. That success does not depend upon superficial glitter, but upon intrinsic merit. Of this we shall speak again in a moment.

One should remember that a lecture is but just begun when the lecturer has finished its delivery. The audience have laughed and clapped, glowed or wept, admired or yawned, as the case may be, and social sympathy has carried them along pretty much together. Now they disperse. They begin to talk on the way home. The father and mother draw the children out, to know how much they heard, and what impression was produced on them; they discuss it, and the family for several days is a debating society. Young men in an office, clerks in a store, mechanics in the shop, boys in the academy, all overhaul the lecture, and for a week it becomes a theme of reflection, discussion, and active criticism. If a lecture is but interesting in the delivery, and full of meat afterwards for a whole week's picking, it sits in judgment on another lecture, brilliant in delivery, but leaving no permanent impressions, no questions, no facts, no reasonings, for after discussions.

It does not take a community to perceive that some lectures instruct them wearisomely, that some instruct and inspire, that some inspire but do not instruct, that some, like fireworks, are magnificent while going off and nothing afterwards, and others, like a pomological show, are fine in the exhibition, and very juicy and refreshing afterwards. What else is there in our towns and villages throughout the land that produces such a degree of pleasure and such universal mental excitement? Is it better to have young people at balls and dances, or at convivial gatherings and barrooms?

It is often said that popular lectures produce superficial habits

and that, instead of reading and reflection, young people become fascinated with easy and brilliant knowledge, to the detriment of sober and reflective information. This may be true in single cases; but in regard to the greatest number who attend lectures, the choice is not between knowledge judiciously gathered by their own industry and knowledge superficially got from a lecture. In respect to the greatest number, it is true that, if they do not get it from the lecture, they will not have it at all. And the real question is, whether it is better for the young to grow up without general knowledge, or to obtain a relish for it from lecturers.

Not long since we read a captious paragraph in a paper, stating that Professor So-and-so, of such a college, had gone to such a village, and but a handful came to hear him; whereas the next week, Mr. Barnum lectured there, and the house could not contain the crowds—and the application made was, that even New England audiences ran after chaff, and did not care for wheat.

But is this a fair statement? Did the writer take pains to ascertain what opinion was formed of Mr. Barnum's lecture; whether the people *afterwards* were as much pleased, as before they were curious? Would they go again in such numbers? And, on the other side, did Professor So-and-so have any previous reputation in that village which should have drawn people to hear him? Perhaps they had heard him before, and therefore stayed away. We have heard college professors that were stupid, even to genius in that direction. There are professors in colleges with gifts at instructing classes, who have no gifts at instructing promiscuous audiences. It is one thing to lead a class along, day by day, opening in successive parts a large subject, and another to project a subject, group it into life form, and set it forth in an hour's time, so that common minds can grasp it, and be entertained withal. But if our disappointed professor was all that it is necessary for a lecturer to be, and the people did not come to hear him, he is in the condition of every young man before the public find him out—a *probationer*. Let him go again, and a third time, and if then those who came at first do not return, and few others supply their place, instead of charging the town with stupidity, might he not better undergo a process of self-examination? Sometimes the people are smart, and the lecturer stupid.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Chapter II, p. 23.



We are speaking, of course, in the general; for we know neither the person named by his injudicious friend in the paragraph alluded to nor the circumstances of the town. And, for aught that we know, next year Professor So-and-so, a little roused up, will prepare a living lecture, written for people that are not students, and will deliver it with such genial animation, that everybody will say that it was *the* lecture of the season, and then the intelligence and appreciativeness of the popular mind will go up above par.

TOWN HALLS—One of the fruits of the lecture system is seen in the multiplication of admirable town halls. Every town ought to have a good hall of its own for popular assemblies and for town meetings. But such reasons would wait long before people would consent to be taxed for an expensive building. But once let the lecture spirit arise, and people be for a few seasons crowded into a court room, or into a church which is soon shut against them, (because men of doubtful orthodoxy are invited to lecture, or because the audience laughed and clapped the speaker, or for a far better and more justifiable reason—because men, calling themselves gentlemen, besmeared the carpets and pews with filthy tobacco spit) and the enterprise of a town hall gains favour, and one or two years sees it built, and the whole town proud of their public spirit. These remarks are suggested by the new building just erected in Hudson, N. Y., where we are now writing. Three years ago we lectured in the court house; last winter, in a church; but last night, in an ample and admirable town hall, which is very creditable to this place.

Ought not such places as New Haven, Bridgeport, Hartford, Springfield, Poughkeepsie, to have public halls bearing some relation to the taste and public spirit of the citizens?

VENTILATION—If they *do*, will they not procure one thing—a *supply of air*. It is astonishing that God should have set such an example before us, and provided such wondrous abundance of air, and men take no hint from it of the prime necessity of this substance for health, brightness, and enjoyment. Almost without a single exception, new halls and old ones are *unventilated*. The committee will point you to an auger-hole in some corner of the ceiling, and tell you that arrangements have been made for ventilation! You might as well insert a goose-quill in a dam to

supply all Lowell with water for its hills! These contemptible little holes, hardly big enough for a fat rat to run in without disarranging his sleek fur, are hardly enough for one breather, and they are set to do the work of a thousand people! Besides no provision is made for the introduction of *fresh air* from below, to supply the place of that which is supposed to pass off. The air trunk of furnaces ought to be double the usual size, and the hot air trunks that lead from the furnace chamber to the room should be four times as large as is usual, so that large volumes of mild air can come in, instead of fierce currents of intensely hot air, out of which the moisture has been dried, and the oxygen burnt, by contact with a red-hot furnace. A room that will seat a thousand persons should have not less than four ventiducts, each one of them larger than a man's whole body. They can be placed at the four corners of the building; or they may be arranged along the sides of the wall, the number being increased as the diameter of each is diminished. But the square inches of the mouths of the ventiducts should be at least *one third greater* than of the mouth of the *heat-trunks* which come from the furnace.

As soon as a speaker begins, he usually finds his cheek flushed, his head full and throbbing. Bad air is at work with him. The blood that is going to his brain has not been purified in his lungs by contact with good air. It has a diminished stimulating power. It is the first stage of suffocation; for all that is done, when a man is hung, is to prevent the passage of air down his windpipe; and if you corrupt the air till it ceases to perform a vital function, it is the same thing in effect; so that a public speaker, in a tainted atmosphere, is going through a prolonged process of atmospheric hanging.

The people, too, instantly show signs of distress. Women begin to fan themselves; children grow sleepy; and well fed men grow red and somnolent. How people can consent to breathe each other's breath over and over again, we never could imagine. They would never return to a hotel where they were put into a bed between sheets that had been used by travellers before them—no, they must have *fresh sheets*. They would go without food rather than eat off a plate used by several parties before them. Clean, fresh plates are indispensable. But, while so deli-

cate of their outside skin and their mouth, they will take air into their lungs that has been breathed over twenty times, by all sorts of persons, and that fairly reeks with feculence; and nothing disgusts them but a proposal to open a window, and let in clean and fresh air. That brings up coat collars, and brings down scowls, and amiable lips pout, and kind tongues declare that they will not go to such a place again, if they do not have these matters regulated better for the health!



## X

### TALKING

**S**PEECH as a revelation of personality was well recognized by Beecher. There is nothing about each one of us which is so personal as our speech habits. One reads Beecher's classification of individuals and the speech they display and subconsciously attempts to classify himself. After reading such an essay we all resolve to be more circumspect in our speech. His humour is apparent as he describes the various classes of talkers. His ability to characterize is shown. In the latter part of the essay we have an example of his power over words and see many statements that are so well said as to be quotable.

Talking and laughing are distinguishing traits of the human species. No animal can laugh, nor, except as a mere mechanical imitation of sounds, can any animal talk. Neither bird nor beast uses articulate speech as a means of conveying thought or of expressing feeling. This is one of the prerogatives of man. But in no other one respect do men differ so much as in laughing or talking. Nor are we apt to consider how closely these acts are connected with, and the result of, the original organization, mental and physical. A secretive and cautious man neither talks fluently nor laughs readily. Some men's conversation is like the ticking of an old-fashioned clock with a long pendulum, whose measured beats are slow and solemn. Once started, they stop for nothing, but drop one word regularly after another, to the end of their methodical sentence. If you are yourself quick, versatile, and in a hurry withal, you grow intolerably restless under the conversation. Your tongue is horse-limbed, and their tongues are ox-footed. At the first half dozen words you perceive their meaning, and then the slow paced utterance of it is surplusage. Perhaps it is your minister. You cannot tell why he is so tedious. What he says is good, and it is well said; but you cannot refrain from

wandering thoughts. You are mercurial and imaginative, and he is phlegmatic and literal. Perhaps it is your schoolmaster, and he bores you with his solemn and long drawn repetitions. Or you may be a bouncing boy, full of sparkles and quips, doomed to stand still and receive the slowly poured admonition or advice. Your nerves rebel. You grow unreasonable. You inwardly mutter all sorts of harmless objurgations. But Nature is imperative.

Men of a cautious and secretive turn of mind are seldom talkers. And when caution is disproportionally powerful, a man will sometimes be unable to do more than issue here and there parts of sentences. He will begin, and stop; begin again, and soon tie up the sentence with a twist of interjected qualifying clause; then again, stopping as if to go back and look over what he has said, as a carpenter *sights* the edge of the work which he is fitting; and, finally, he will leave the sentence very much out in a heap upon the ground. And yet we have known such men to be very keen in perception, acute in thought, and shrewd in judgment. But it seems as if there were some break in the machinery which connects the thinking part and the language part of the mind. And their conversation resembles a tune played upon an old piano, half of whose keys do not connect with the wires, and give no sound.

Some men use words as riflemen do bullets. They say little. The few words used go right to the mark. They let you talk, and guide with their eye and face, on and on, till what you say can be answered in a word or two, and then they lance out a sentence, pierce the matter to the quick and are done. You never know where you stand with them. Your conversation falls into their mind, as rivers fall into deep chasms and are lost from sight by its depth and darkness. They will sometimes surprise you with a few words, that go right to the mark like a gunshot, and then they are silent again, as if they were reloading.

In this class must be reckoned men who alternate between drought and freshet. Sometimes for days or hours they are all dried up. Suddenly they will send forth an immense tide of speech that quite sweeps you away. We have seen men like the far famed Iceland Geysers, who never talked till they were mad, and then spouted terribly. It is said of those northern hot springs, that if you throw a stone or tuft of grass into their throats, you

soon bring up their torrents of scalding water at a most furious rate.

In strong contrast with such are the smooth, oily talkers whom we occasionally meet, whose voices are soft and sweet, and who have an inimitable talent in flowing on, without let or hindrance, in the most genial and soothing manner. They steal upon your ear and lull your temper; they come upon you with a kind of charge that resembles a May atmosphere after March winds. One cannot remember what they say, but at the time the charm amounts almost to a fascination. One word takes hold of another with such a soft touch, and one sentence moves into another, as drops of water in a stream move indistinguishably upon each other.

There seems no reason to doubt that a propensity to talk is as much a natural gift as a propensity to invent or to construct. We have known persons who neither cared whether you listened to them or heeded their utterances. A good woman, we once knew, talked as rivers run, by the necessity of some inward gravitation toward outflow. She would begin with morning, talk, talk, talk, in a cheery, changeable way, branching off in this direction or that, running off on this analogy, or toward that suggestion all breakfast time, all the while the table was being cleared. One by one the people in the room—who had learned to listen to her no more than we hear the ticking of a clock or any other continuous sound—would go out, till the last one had left. It was all the same to her; a low murmur might be heard in the room, by those adjoining it, for the good soul was pleasantly talking all alone. When you entered again she merely continued, and so on all day and evening. It was a double mystery how she found strength and material for such a perennial flow by daylight. But, once impressed with the inevitableness of her tongue, you next wondered what miraculous power bound it to silence at night. It was like a brook from the glaciers, which flows all day while the sun shines on the ice, but is sealed up by frosts at night.

But the subject is vast. We have touched but the external edge. The tongue of man cannot be described in an article. It has deep inward relations. It has national and political bearings. It is the silver bell of the soul, the iron and crashing hammer of the anvil. It is like a magician's wand, full of all



incantation and witchery; or it is a sceptre in a king's hand, and sways men with imperial authority.

The pen is the tongue of the hand—a silent utterer of words for the eye—the unmusical substitute of the literal tongue, which is the soul's prophet, the heart's minister, and the interpreter of the understanding.

## XI

### STREET CRIES AND ORATORS' VOICES

**B**EECHER'S voice was often singled out for mention by those who wrote of his oratorical power. The range and beauty of his voice were noticed by Henry Irving. His effective vocal utterance was not a product of chance, as I have shown. In his own, original, inimitable way he shows the necessity of being able to manage his voice well. His illustrations show his acquaintance with the inhabitants of the barnyard and the workers on the public thoroughfare. His last sentence in this article reveals his interest in voice because it is an instrument in controlling the audience. "For in speaking it is *quality* and not *quantity* that give control of an audience."

I am reminded of my duty, by hearing the boys in the streets crying out, "New York Ledger!" with a saucy tone, as much as to say, "Have you got your ears open, sir? D'ye see, sir?" Did you ever take notice of the voices of men and boys that get their living by their lusty crying? A public speaker may well envy them. Public speakers seldom have great advantage over other men in voice, power, or quality. It is rare, rather than common, among the tens of thousands whose offices require public speaking, to hear a man of a commanding voice, or to find a speaker whose tones are smooth, unlaboured, and yet penetrating. Some men are boisterous and vociferous, that they may give force to their sentences. But that gun does not carry a ball the farthest that makes the most noise in going off. The crack of a rifle is anything but noisy. Such is the want of good voice capital, that men are always talking about good speaking rooms, and the acoustic properties of lecture rooms. But the best of all properties in a speaking hall is, a man that knows how to speak, and has something to speak with! What does a rooster care for acoustic aids? He mounts a fence lustily, gives a preliminary flap of his wings, as if to say, "I could have flown twice as high," and

then lets off a crow that rings and echoes for a mile around. A bull will sound you a bass note that would make old Westminster Abbey shake. A crow will caw to you at two miles distance without the fear of bronchitis. A dog will bark to a whole town without the slightest inconvenience—to himself. And yet men who are brought up to speaking as the business of their lives cannot make themselves heard at a hundred feet distance, or, only by exertions that send them home for liniments, bandages, and caustic!

It does not follow because a bird can fly, that a man can, it may be said; and that the vigour of bird and beast in vocal organs is no fair analogy for men. But it becomes so, when it is observed that men who have vigour of body, who live much in the open air, and who practise their voice in the free, open outdoors, come to have the same resonance and almost the same power that is found in animals. A ploughboy can be heard over a whole neighbourhood; an ox driver of the old sort needed no horn to let people know that he was driving into town. Far off his coming *sounds*. Military men and shipmasters attain to great power of propagating sounds. It may be said that, though such persons are able to eject single orders, or sentences, they could not sustain the fatigue of a continuous delivery for an hour.

But newsboys, old-clothes men, all street-cryers, and, above all, chimneysweeps, have voices in exercise from morning till night, that are full, round, and often rich and melodious. There used to be in Brooklyn a chimneysweep whose voice I coveted more than his trade or complexion. I was walking one day along Orange Street, toward the Heights, when the whole air seemed full and overflowing with a sound as smooth, round, and melodious as an organ diapason. It fairly rained down for abundance and universality. The houses reflected it. The streets were channels in which the airy stream flowed. I looked in every direction for the cause. No man seemed the author. I looked up and down the street, turned around to every quarter—for the sound came equally from everywhere—until at length, mounted upon the chimney-top of one of the highest houses, sat the fellow like a king on his throne. Astride of the stack, lowering or pulling up his scraping machine, he was perched like a blackbird indeed; but much more musical! Ah, did I not have to lay fast hold of



the commandments, to save myself from coveting? This fellow, without doubt, if he ever lived in a pre-existent state, was an organ-pipe, and the divinities gave him life, and changed his bellows to lungs, as a reward of merit.

But to return from Ethiopia:—

These newsboys show what out of door practice will do for a man's lungs. Here is a lawyer who can hardly fill a court room. What would he do if he had a long street before him? What would the pale and feeble speaking minister do, who can scarcely make his voice reach two hundred auditors, if he were set to cry "New York Ledger"? These newsboys stand at the head of a street, and send down their voice through it, as an athlete would roll a ball down an alley. We advise men training for speaking professions to peddle wares in the streets for a little time. Young ministers might go into partnership with newsboys a while, till they got their mouths open, and their larynx nerved and toughened.

The great want of public speakers is *general vigour*. They need open air, toughening exercise, practice of speaking under the skies—*speaking*, not *bawling*. A man may tear his voice up by the roots, by too much of a gale. There is such a thing as *speaking at a mark!* With the same tone, let a man practise, removing the hearer step by step each day, till, with the same exertion, he can be heard at great distances. In this way he will develop *quality* of tone. For in speaking it is *quality* and not *quantity* that gives control of an audience.

## XII

### CONVERSATIONAL FAULTS

WHATEVER one can learn about conversation is welcome, whether it be from De Quincey or Beecher. These remarks of Beecher will help each one of us to avoid the faults he mentions and make each of us more agreeable to our companions. Beecher's sensitivity to language is revealed in his sentence, "Sometimes a single word, like a drop of ink in a tumbler of water, will change the colour of a whole statement." His ability to illustrate aptly is shown to good advantage in this essay. His facetiousness is also apparent.

Every child is early admonished of the rudeness of interrupting a person while speaking. But why this caution should be confined to children we cannot imagine. Their rudeness is the least provoking of any. It is the exhibitions that we meet in genteel society that mar our comfort most and excite our surprise. And among adults we learn to be patient with impetuous natures, whose strong and ungoverned feelings, touched by some spark in your words, go off like bombs, past all power of restraint.

But the aggravated offenders are those who interject your conversation with comments and hints, or vexatious corrections, or meddling smartness, and so take from you all pleasure of fluency. Just as you are coming to the nub of a story, they quietly drop a sentence which tells the whole, and leave you with only the mortifying remnants. Is it a jest that is loaded and in your hand? They slyly step behind you and pull the trigger, leaving you empty as an exploded gun barrel.

Sometimes a single word, like a drop of ink in a tumbler of water, will change the colour of a whole statement. You cannot repel it, nor answer it, for it attacks nothing, says nothing positively, but only fixes in the mind certain suggestions.

There is an inflection of this evil, equally vexatious. It is when a shrewd lip comments in your ear, whisperingly, or aside, upon

the remarks or address to which you are listening. It may be that you are not of a retentive countenance. A ludicrous word, dropped just right, sets you into a laugh, irresistible just in proportion to its impoliteness. *You* seem to mock the person speaking, while the arch-whisperer sits demurely, without blame, as innocent as a dove.

Yet less bearable are the comments of conceited persons upon some performance to which you wish to give your attention. While a symphony is performing, they interpolate it: "Sublime," "Fine, very fine, don't you think so," "Rather dull, that." During a discourse they are perpetually setting their remarks upon your ears, bringing you back to consciousness, and to contempt. They sing in your ears like mosquitoes, they alight upon you as flies in summer days, only you are debarred the pleasure of aiming a good slap at them. It is seriously to be considered whether this is not a case where a hearty box on the ear would not be entirely proper, moral, and reformatory?

But there is another rudeness which, if less frequent, is equally annoying. It is the rudeness of the talker and not of the interrupter. Many will ask you a question and answer it themselves; they will find fault with you, and race forward with remarks so as to prevent any explanation; nay, they will aggravate the matter by putting stupid replies in your mouth, and then answering *them*. "Don't speak—I know what you are going to say—but it is not so, for ——" etc.

Many people have a very cool way of seeing what you think and insisting upon it; they saw it in your eyes, or in your face, and will permit no denial. Sometimes you are caught upon a turbulent stream of talk which sweeps you down in the most ludicrous way. You are whirled round, and soused, and overwhelmed with the rushing talk, while you can not answer or get rid of or modify. At a table, or in a car or boat, a man of opposite politics pours at you for a half-hour, misstating your position, charging you with all manner of absurdities, exaggerating facts, and abusing you and your friends and your party, and all the world generally, while you are like a man being played on by a fire-engine—dishevelled, soused, half-smothered, and rolled up into a ridiculous heap.

Ought not some mark be put upon such men, to warn every-



one of their danger? We mark dangerous places on the highway; we put up a sign on a broken bridge; we warn people from a dangerous ford. And yet these are lesser dangers! Why should not men wear some badge significant of their propensities? We put buttons on oxen's horns as a hint. We put a board on a cow's face intimating her dangerous propensity; we put a shackle or a poke upon a horse that is addicted to extending the area of his freedom. Why not put signs upon dangerous people?

### XIII

#### BEECHER IN ENGLAND, 1863

**H**OW interesting and worth while it would be if we had Demosthenes' account of his experience in his oratorical battle with Æschines. In these paragraphs that follow we have an account by an orator of one of the greatest triumphs of oratory in modern times. This account by Beecher of his battle with an audience provides excellent insight into audience control. Note the fact that he abandoned his immediate preparation to better adapt himself to his audience and collaborate with their thinking. These remarks are taken from his *Lecture Room Talks*, which he gave to his congregation on Friday nights during the year.

When I came to Manchester from Edinburgh, I knew the moment I saw the committee who met me at the cars, by the way they looked, what was on their minds; for I had received some intimation from the papers that there was a storm brewing; and when these gentlemen, after driving to the hotel, asked to see me a few moments before retiring (that was Thursday night, and I was to speak Friday evening), I said: "If you mean this row in the streets, do not give yourselves any concern, I am ready for it." We dispatched that little matter of business in less than five minutes. I prepared the next day a formal programme of my speech; and I never shall forget my ride with two or three gentlemen that accompanied me to the hall at the hour appointed for the lecture. It was raining a little, and I remember the shadowy look that everything had as I passed down the streets. I recollect saying to myself, "I am going to I know not what." And I call to mind the prayer that silently went up from my heart all the way. It was simply this: that I might be a witness for that which should please God, without any regard to men, and especially without any regard to myself. It was not what we sometimes experience—a perception of what is right, and a

struggle to get at it. I was in the feeling already, and it was out of the experience that I prayed for more of it. I was willing to be nothing for the sake of Christ, and my reputation was nothing at all to me. I said: "If the enemies of God triumph over me, and put me to shame here tonight, it will be perfectly right. I am willing that it should be so, if it be the will of God."

In such a condition of spirit I went into that great Free Trade Hall, which holds eight thousand people; and, next to that in Liverpool, the audience here was the most difficult to manage of all that I addressed; and that being my first public speech in England, it was the most critical period. I saw at once that there was a team to be driven there such that it would not do for the coachman to be asleep on the box! And then I had it borne in upon me that in my lecture I had better not undertake to follow the course I had proposed; so I laid down my notes, and struck out another plan, and extemporized the whole speech. For I had two things to do all the time. The unfolding of the subject was secondary. I had to control the audience primarily, while opening, as far as consistent with the subject which I had in hand. And during the tumult and the interruptions (which were far greater than anything that you would be led to infer from the reports that appeared), during the tremendous excitement that prevailed, I was so far from being excited or disturbed that the thought of being so struck me as no less absurd than the thought of a man getting irritated in summer while sitting by the side of a persistently babbling brook. It did not seem that that tumult of the people had any relation to me individually. And while it was going on and raging, it seemed almost like the sound of a storm at sea, or of the wind among trees, which I, in connection with all nature, had my share of, but which did not belong to me particularly.

And afterwards, when I went to Glasgow, where there is a great deal of ship building, and where for commercial reasons there is a great deal of Southern sympathy, I had the same feeling. I made my preparation on the day I spoke, and I never came into this room in a more truly "revival" frame of mind than, when the evening came, I went on the platform there. And it was the same in Edinburgh.

When I came to Liverpool—the scene of the hardest of all the



labour I performed during my absence; where I waded; where the Red Sea closed on me, and I had to swim through to the other shore, the wheels of my chariot coming off, and the chariot dragging heavily at the bottom—though I was exhausted in body, and all used up, like a shipmaster who for two hours and a half in a violent gale has been obliged to bawl out his commands incessantly, yet I never lost the feeling of compassion. I felt as royal as a prince, and looked down on the audience as a prince would look down on the sports of children. And when the men did the most outrageously insulting things, they did not insult me. The taunts, the jeers, the whistlings, the yelling; the cutting in two of my sentences, or, when I began them, ending them in the most comical manner; the spoiling of sentiments, and turning my own words back on me—and this not once, or twice, but straight through for two hours and a half, in a way that I must pronounce utterly unfair and ungentlemanly—these things never for a moment disturbed me. I felt all the time that I had a great parcel of children there, and that I was, as it were, a nurse, and was managing them; and I had the feeling of kindness and compassion and sorrow for them from beginning to end.

Now, you know enough of me to know that patience is not a natural gift. I have as much temper as anybody, and as much disposition to use it for rebuffing any aggressions upon my personal propriety and honour. I look upon that frame of mind as the fulfilment of my prayer to God that He would accept my labour, and that He would sustain me in it not only, but prepare me for it, all the way through.

No sooner were my lectures spoken than they were like chickens, with twenty hawks watching for each chicken. The ablest papers in England, the *London Times*, the *Standard*, the *Telegraph*, the Liverpool and Manchester papers, and the Scotch papers, all came down upon me in the most unhandsome style; and yet with these it was as it was with the turbulent audiences—I simply did not care.

And that spirit abode with me to the very last. Why, the fact is, when I was preparing to go away from London, and from Liverpool, we had a good crying meeting. The breakfast at which I bade farewell to the brethren of these places was one at which we all had a good cry. I felt as though I was leaving old com-

panions; and I felt a love, not only for those that were there, but for those that were not there, and would not have been there; and my whole heart left its blessing on England—on Great Britain—good and bad, the whole of them.

## XIV

### SUCCESSFUL PREACHING <sup>1</sup>

**A**S I have said, it is entirely possible that this lecture by Beecher caused Henry W. Sage to think that a series of lectures on the subject would be beneficial to students of preaching. One is led more to believe this, when it is remembered that one of the other lectures in this small volume was by John Hall who gave the *Yale Lectures* the year following Beecher's in 1875. One can see embryo thoughts in *Successful Preaching* that are developed more fully in the *Yale Lectures*. Also, there are repeated ideas which find expression in some of the earlier essays on the subject. Its chief importance to the student of Beecher is historical, although it serves to point out what he considered fundamentally important.

You must not think that I have come to deliver a set speech, either about theology or about the preparation for the ministry. They are your daily discipline, and I am sure that you are not lacking in counsel upon them. I could wish that I had a more select audience, that I might sit in your classroom and talk with you; but as it is, I accept the audience, and the occasion, and will try to say something that will be of service to you.

There is a vast difference between the old way of training ministers and the present way. Formerly a young man put himself under the care of some good minister, and not only pursued theological studies, but also was kept busy in working among people. He had to try his powers under the eye of a master, just as the young physician and the young lawyer must work under their guides. Nowadays, however, the student, shut up in his theological seminary, sees nothing of the work until he is thrown into it, and then he must depend upon himself. I do not mean to disparage studying from books: all of it is good and necessary,

<sup>1</sup> Delivered at Princeton, 1870.



and the more of it you can get the better; but it is not all that is necessary. You must besides know men and their ways. The parish is very different from the seminary, and you must suit yourself to it. Our blessed Saviour said to His disciples: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," and these words belong to you as much as to them. You are to be *Fishers of Men*, and therefore you must know all about *Men*. Men are in danger of eternal death, and you must catch them with your hook and draw them from destruction. For this work you must have a vigorous life in you, and you must be in earnest. And then this life is to be brought to bear on men. Your living power must be brought in personal contact with men; you must catch them and compel them to come with you. For getting this needed power there is but one way. Man cannot give it to you, books cannot give it to you, and even knowledge of men cannot give it to you. It only comes from Christ; it is by union with Him that you get this new force. And with Christ in your soul, you will succeed in catching men. This union with God is the only true manhood for you, and the only true manhood for the men around you, and you must catch them and win them to it. So much then is determined—that you are to be fishers of men.

Now let us look at some of the limitations and hindrances in the pulpit. Ministers seem to have a professional ignorance of men. They are fishers of men. Yes, but they must fish *where the men are*. What would you think of a fishing smack which, sailing from Yarmouth in search of fish, should steer for Madeira? It is a lovely island, a nice place to go to, but why should a fishing boat go there? Just so nowadays we see a young man start out, and instead of looking for men, for the population where it can be caught, he wants a parish, a comfortable place! Did you ever see a dandy fisherman? He has the correct suit on, his pole is a beauty from Conroy's, his line is of the best gut, his book is full of artificial flies—plenty of artificial flies—his fish basket hangs behind him, and he is a fisherman. Maybe. Let us go to the stream. Standing with a knowing air, he throws his fly, but the fish do not rise at it; and he throws again, and again they do not rise. And all the while a barefooted, coatless boy on the other side of the brook is catching fish as fast as he can pull them in. He just has a rough hook on a bit of string, and a worm for

bait, *but he gets the fish*. And off goes our dandy in disgust with the vulgar fish who will not bite at his nice flies. You must go where you will find men to be caught, free fish that are ready to bite, and you must know their habits. That is one thing in which a theological seminary fails: it does not teach enough about men. The chair of pastoral theology might do more of this than it does. Systematic, didactic, and polemic theology are good, but for you they must become operative theology. Otherwise you will be like a carpenter with fine tools, but who does not know how to use them. Here lies the chest, this is an auger, a chisel, a plane, a pair of dividers, a mallet, and all new and clean. But ask him to make a table. Oh, no, he has not learned to do that. Well then let him put up a house. No, he knows nothing about architecture; he just has a box of tools, and that is the end of it. In like manner a preacher might leave the seminary and preach ideas, discuss theology, and never touch the secret springs of the people, never catch a single man.

Some of these men fall into what we may call the idolatry of the sermon. They think the sermon is everything. Christ's words for them are, "I will make you fishers of sermons." If they can but write good sermons, then their work is done, there is no need of visiting the people or of doing anything further. They grind out the sermons week after week, but there is none of that active Christian life which is so much needed. In two years a man's ideas have run out, and what then? Well, as the ladies turn their dresses, he begins to turn the old sermons and preach them over again. Instead of running solely on ideas, his life should run upon *men*, and grow and move upon them. He should know his people, and preach to suit their wants. If a man preaches simply a system of morals, simply a system of theology, yes, even the Bible itself in this lifeless way, his ideas will come to an end. He must preach to men, and try the sermons on men. It is said of Whitefield that he would preach a sermon half a dozen times, each time changing it according as he had marked faults in its last delivery. Preach to a certain person's needs and see how you can hit him. Thus you will write good sermons, yes, *good* sermons, for sermons are only good when they do the work. The most elegantly finished discourse would be a bad one if it did not do the work.

Preachers are sometimes in sympathy with the divine government and with theology in its various branches, more than they are in sympathy with men. This is a great pity. Men with great learning, and even with earnest feeling, fail altogether to catch men because they do not stoop to sympathize with them. This was not the way Christ and His Apostles wrought. Hear Paul's words to the Corinthians: "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without the law, as without the law, (being not without the law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you." Paul, the strict Pharisee, the learned and accomplished man, knew that to win men he must sympathize with them; and if you will catch them you must do the same.

Whatever else you do, do not preach poetry, and sentiment merely, for these will not save and will not catch men. Do not make essays and dissertations upon the beauty of the universe or the charms of the good morals; I mean, and I may as well say it plainly, *Unitarianism*. This is not good to catch souls. Give me a religion with a righteous, a just God in it, and with doctrines of sin, of retribution, of a hell to be avoided. These are the things which men need to hear of, and it is these alone which will meet their hearts. When I was a boy and went out after chestnuts, I used to gather a motley assortment of clubs, and then begin throwing at the nuts. One club would fly away over the tree, another slip harmlessly through the branches, but at last one would hit fair on the bunch of chestnuts and down they rattled. That was the club for me. So in preaching, I want a doctrine that will hit and bring down people. The best preaching of morals never made more than a dent. It is shooting with blunt arrows; and more than that, the ends are padded. To fish for men, you must preach the truth of the Bible.

*Do not be in constant fear of your reputation.* Be sure to



catch men, that is your work. If you have a terror of a presbytery or a school of theology ever oppressing you, you need not expect to be much. You must live, breathe, speak freely. It is wrong to confine yourself to a certain set kind of sermons, to demand from your pen an exact style, to think constantly of some neighbouring orthodox theologian, and all the while forget to try to catch men. Write in good taste, according to the best models, and in the purest theology, but do it from habit and with your thoughts bent on the men you are fishing for. Many men make the advance of their sect the aim of their work. They deify the Church. You would think that these people had a quaternity instead of a trinity. They say the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, and the *Church*. You hear nothing, first, second, and last, but *the Church, the Church*. They make the means an end. All this is wrong. The Church is good, but the Church is not first, and is not to be preached. The factors for our preaching are God and man, and whatever else comes in must hold a lower place.

The next head is to *avoid class preaching*. Ministers are clannish, they go with each other a great deal, they discuss their theology and their sermons together, and they run in ruts. The minister must shun all class feeling. He must be a common man among common men. There should be no hierarchy: we are all, in apostolic language, brethren. Further than this, however, not a few fall into the habit of preaching to certain classes; our churches become class churches, and these churches are weak. A strong church must have all classes in it: each has his place and his work before God. You will find a minister preaching a deep, acutely thought out sermon. Mr. B—— the lawyer waits at the door to say that he liked it. The man strains all the week to write just such another for the next Sabbath. And so he preaches to the educated, at the expense of the poor, over whose head he passes unheard.

Another great hindrance is want of breadth. And first, I would call your attention to pulpits. I consider them devil-invented obstructions to the gospel. When a congregation builds such a church, the question is, How can we do better than others? "That hateful church over the way, we must beat it." And so the architect may build the church anyhow, so that it is ten

feet longer, five feet wider, and has a spire twenty-five feet higher than the rival church. It is next to impossible to ventilate it. You would think it very dirty to sleep in a bed where a stranger had slept, or to eat off a plate that had been used, and it is far dirtier to breathe air that others have breathed; but this last you will do sixteen times over in your church. And then for the pews. Well, we must have pews, I suppose, and pews are put in; and then a pulpit, what for it? The architect makes it so as to match the rest of the house, and puts it away off from the pews. Why see here, I am "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." In speaking, a great deal depends on the personal, magnetic influence. The people should be so close that you could lay your hand on them all around. When you speak to men earnestly, you draw near to them. There would be fewer marriages than now, if courting could only be done with the lover at a second story window and his lady on the ground. Words chill quickly in crossing empty air. And you know that pulpits box a man up till he is but half a man. Many a minister falls into careless ways of standing and speaking just because he is so shut in. No, no, you must stand free and clear, and talk like a man. One of the most finished preachers I know, when boxed up and stowed away in a pulpit, drew comparatively few people; but when in altering his church he was driven to a public hall and a platform, and came to talk to the audience freely, he drew many to hear him.

Again, ministers do not dare to put their whole selves into their sermons. They are afraid to let themselves out. On the other hand they should give themselves wholly to the work of preaching. They should draw on every faculty they possess; anything—only catch men.

As well do they fail in the selection of sermons. To give a connected theological system is only part; you must pick up and make use of every point of life. Like a chartmaker, it will not do for you to point out a few big rocks and let the little ones go; you are bound to lay out all the ground as well as you can. *Strike each man at least once.*

This is a moment of profound solicitude for every friend of his country. You go out to a great work. This last matter of universal suffrage is to be tried, and you will have an important

influence in educating the whole people to their duty as citizens by teaching them their duty to God. For honour, for joy, and for purity, there is no profession like the ministry. The sweetest moment possible for a man is that in which he hears a soul confess that it has been led to Christ at his hands. Nor is there any overwhelming responsibility in the work. And besides, a minister has more sympathy than any man in the community. In all your work, live with Christ, and He will bless, guide, and crown you.



## XV

### WHAT IS PREACHING?

THE next nine lectures are taken from the *Yale Lectures on Preaching*.<sup>1</sup> All of Beecher's powers seem to find expression in them: his felicity of illustration, his choice of the right word, the flash of wit and humour, his sympathy with man, his power of extemporization, his ability to dispense with formalism and to talk about homely things, his shrewd common sense. These talks come from the depths of his experience and reflection. We have seen how now and then during the years he contributed to "The Independent" essays on subjects related to the problems of speech composition and delivery. Once when Lyman Abbott asked him, "Where is that sermon on pulpit dynamics?" Beecher replied, "It is not ripe, but I'll get something out of it yet." "What he did get," Lyman Abbott states, "was a mature lecture ten years later." So when Beecher went to Yale he was prepared. The rush of events in his life prevented him from preparing formally which was after all a good thing. Paxton Hibben comments on this: "It was fortunate, for Henry Ward was compelled to fall back upon his own personal experience for subject matter, and there was a consequent impression of verity in what he said that make his *Yale Lectures* stand out, sound and enduring beyond anything else in the vast mass of Henry Ward Beecher's prodigious output." Such a quotation coming from Paxton Hibben possesses double force because he sees very little to praise in Henry Ward Beecher. Hibben is, however, but echoing Lyman Abbott's judgment. John A. Broadus testifies to their worth: "The first and second volumes are of great value, fresh, often very striking, and everywhere suggestive." I hope the reader will find in these lectures the same helpfulness that countless other students have discovered in times past. So fundamental is Beecher's grasp of

<sup>1</sup> Chapters XV-XXIII.

the problems of speaking that scarcely one of the succeeding Yale lecturers on preaching fails to quote in one way or another from Beecher.

What would you think of a physician in the household who has been called to minister to a sick member of some family, and who says, "Well, I will leave something or other; I don't know; what shall I leave?" and he looks in his saddlebags to see what he has yet got the most of, and prescribes it with no directions; the father, mother, and children may all take a little, and the servants may have the rest. Another physician, and a true one, comes, and the mother says: "Doctor, I have called you in to prescribe for my child." He sits down and studies the child's symptoms; traces them back to the supposed cause; reflects how he shall hit that case, what remedial agents are supposed to be effective, what shall be the form of administration, how often; he considers the child's temperament and age, and adapts himself to the special necessity of the individual case.

Do you suppose a man can deal with so subtle a thing as the human soul without any thought, skill, sagacity in adaptation; can take a sermon and throw its contents over the congregation, and let everybody pick out of it what he can find—each man left to take his share?

I remember the first sermon I ever preached. I had preached a good many sermons before, too. But I remember the first real one. I had preached a good while as I had used my gun. I used to go out hunting by myself, and I had great success in firing off my gun; and the game enjoyed it as much as I did, for I never hit them or hurt them. I fired off my gun as I see hundreds of men firing off their sermons. I loaded it, and bang!—there was a smoke, a report, but nothing fell; and so it was again and again. I recollect one day in the fields my father pointed out a little red squirrel, and said to me, "Henry, would you like to shoot him?" I trembled all over, but I said, "Yes." He got down on his knee, put the gun across a rail, and said, "Henry, keep perfectly cool, perfectly cool; take aim." And I did, and I fired, and over went the squirrel, and he didn't run away either. That was the first thing I ever hit; and I felt an inch taller, as a boy that had killed a squirrel, and knew how to aim a gun.

I had preached two years and a half at Lawrenceburg, in Indiana (and some sporadic sermons before that) when I went to Indianapolis. While there I was very much discontented. I had been discontented for two years. I had expected that there would be a general public interest, and especially in the week before the communion season. In the West we had protracted meetings, and the people would come up to a high point of feeling; but I never could get them beyond that. They would come down again, and there would be no conversions. I sent for Dr. Stowe<sup>2</sup> to come down and help me; but he would not come, for he thought it better for me to bear the yoke myself. When I had lived at Indianapolis the first year, I said: "There was a reason why when the Apostles preached they succeeded, and I will find it out if it is to be found out." I took every single instance in the Record, where I could find one of their sermons, and analyzed it and asked myself: "What were the circumstances? who were the people? what did he do?" and I studied the sermons until I got this idea: That the Apostles were accustomed first to feel for a ground upon which the people and they stood together; a common ground where they could meet. Then they heaped up a large number of the particulars of knowledge that belonged to everybody; and when they had got that knowledge, which everybody would admit, placed in a proper form before their minds, then they brought it to bear upon them with all their excited heart and feeling. That was the first definite idea of taking aim that I had in my mind.

"Now," said I, "I will make a sermon so." I remember it just as well as if it were yesterday. First, I sketched out the things we all know. "You all know you are living in a world perishing under your feet. You all know that time is extremely uncertain; that you cannot tell whether you will live another month or week. You all know that your destiny, in the life that is to come, depends upon the character you are forming in this life"; and in that way I went on with my "You all knows," until I had

<sup>2</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe was the wife of Dr. Stowe. Of Beecher's friendship for Dr. Stowe, Mrs. Stowe writes: "Henry Ward was never without the anchor of an enthusiastic personal attachment for somebody, and at Lane Seminary, he formed such an intimacy with Professor C. E. Stowe, whose roommate for some length of time he was, and in whose society he took great delight."—*Self-Made Men*, p. 532 (Boston, 1872).



about forty of them. When I had got through that, I turned round and brought it to bear upon them with all my might; and there were seventeen men awakened under that sermon. I never felt so triumphant in my life. I cried all the way home. I said to myself: "Now I know how to preach."

I could not make another sermon for months that was good for anything. I had used all my powder and shot on that one. But, for the first time in my life, I had got the idea of taking aim. I soon added to it the idea of analyzing the people I was preaching to, and so taking aim for specialties. Of course that came gradually and later, with growing knowledge and experience. . . .

No man ought to go into the pulpit with the direct kind of sermon without having a definite reason why he selected one subject rather than another, and why he put it in one form rather than another. The old-fashioned way of sermonizing affords us some amusement; but they did a great deal of good with those queer, regulation old methods of first, second, third, and then the subdivisions. I remember that, in my boyhood, the moment a man announced his text, I could tell pretty nearly as well as he could how he would lay it out, because I knew he must proceed according to certain forms.

It seems to me that the highest conception of a sermon is, that it is a prescription which a man has made, either for a certain individual, or for a certain class, or for a certain state of things that he knows to exist in the congregation. It is as much a matter of prescription as the physician's medicine is. For instance, you say, "In my congregation there has been a good deal of affliction, which I think I ought to comfort. Now, of all ways of comforting, how shall I do it? Shall I show the hand of God in all His administration? What will that do? That mode of consolation will raise people up into the conception of God; but those that can not rise so high will fall short of it and not get it. Or, I can show them how afflictions will elevate the soul; and that will have another range. Or, it may be that I will not say a word about that, but strike a blow that exhilarates men and lifts them up, independent of any allusion to troubles; I may strike a chord to awaken the courage of men. What subject can I take which will most successfully sound that chord? And so you look for your subject. You know what you are after the whole time. It

is exactly like the watchmaker, who has opened your watch and discovered that something is wrong. He turns to his bench and pokes around among his tools, but cannot find what he wants; he looks everywhere for it, and at last, there it is, and he takes it and uses it, for it is the only instrument exactly fitted to do just the thing he wanted to do in that watch. Now, in preaching to a congregation there are living men to reach; and there is a particular way of doing it that you want to get at. You search for it in the Bible; and you make your sermon to answer the end. This is psychological preaching, drawing from your own gradually augmenting intelligence and experience, which will make you skillful in the ends you want to effect. . . .

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS <sup>3</sup>

*If you went into a neighbourhood where Universalism or Spiritualism prevailed, would you preach against them or pass them by?*

I cannot answer that question precisely, it would depend on so many considerations; the first of which might be how far the preacher were himself infected with it. Secondly, what class of the community was infected. If the thinking class, and the influential, three or four families, I might take one course; but if it was only the ignorant, and those that had no influence upon society, I might take another course.

*Don't you think it is a good plan to preach a variety of sermons, intellectual and emotional?*

Never two alike, if you can help it. I heard described the other day a style of preaching which was likened to the way they are

<sup>3</sup> Charles Dudley Warner gives a picture of Henry Ward Beecher answering questions at Yale University: "I heard him deliver once one of the foundation discourses on preaching to the theological students at Yale. It was an address of very considerable power, suggestive, reminiscent, witty, full of the wisdom of experience; but the great intellectual display came afterwards, when he said that he would try to answer any questions put to him. . . . His replies were always brief, and they came as quick as a flash of lightning. I never saw before or since—for it seemed as if you could see his mind flash—such an intellectual display. . . . He stood there all aglow, turning quickly from side to side, perfectly calm and yet nervously alive from his head to his feet, a curious smile wreathing his lips, and his eyes flaming and dancing, I thought I had never seen such a complete fusion of the physical and intellectual man."—*Beecher Memorial*, p. 74 f. (New York, 1887).

said to build ships down in Maine. They build them down there by the mile; and when they have an order they cut off so much, round up a stern and a bow, and send it. Thus some sermons seem to have been built by the mile. There seems to be no earthly reason why the preacher should begin in one place rather than another, or why he should stop in one place rather than another. He could preach ten hours, if not ordered to stop and wherever he stops he is ready to begin again; and so to go on until judgment day. That kind of iteration is the most hurtful of all things. A man keeps a boarding house and the boarders like bacon for breakfast. So he gives them bacon on Monday, and Tuesday, and Wednesday, and Thursday, and Friday, and Saturday, and Sunday, and Monday, and Tuesday—until by and by one of them comes to him and says: "Mr. Jacobs, we like bacon pretty well, but lately we have got tired of it; we should like something else." "Well, what will you have?" "Let us have pork and beans." So he gives them pork and beans on Monday, pork and beans on Tuesday, and on Wednesday, and keeps feeding them on pork and beans until they protest again.



## XVI

### QUALIFICATIONS OF THE PREACHER

A TRUE minister is a man whose manhood itself is a strong and influential argument with his people. He lives in such relations with God, and in such genuine sympathy with man, that it is a pleasure to be under the unconscious influence of such a mind. . . .

There is no form of preaching that can afford to dispense with the preacher's moral beauty. He may be as homely as you please, physically; as awkward as you please; but you will find in the true preacher somewhere an element of beauty; for God works always toward beauty; which is one sign of perfection, so that, though not an essential element, beauty is still a sign and token of the higher forms of creation. . . .

A good many young men, beginning to preach, feel that they don't know what to do. They naturally fall back upon their notebooks, upon the development of some system of truth. They undertake to present to their people topic after topic based upon great gospel themes. And of course, they can do no better than that in the beginning. Still, that is rather preparing to preach than preaching. It is like a man who is practising with his rifle at a target that he does not see, who hits by accident if he hits, rather than by deliberate aim. You cannot expect a man to do better until he has learned. It is no easy thing for one to be in such familiar possession of the great moral truths revealed in the Bible, and in such familiar knowledge of men's natures and dispositions, that he can take the one and fit it to the other almost by intuition. But intuition is only a name for superior habit.

No one should be discouraged in the beginning of his ministry, therefore, if he finds himself running short of subjects; preaching a great deal and accomplishing but very little; having comparatively a light hold upon truths, and not being able by these truths to grapple men effectually. Everyone has an ideal in his mind. He thinks of Whitefield; and of Jonathan Edwards, with the

man pulling at his coat-tails and trying to stop that terrible burst of statement and denunciation that was crushing the congregation. Every young man who is aspiring wants to do great things, and to preach great sermons. Great sermons, young gentlemen, ninety-nine times in a hundred, are nuisances. They are like steeples without any bells in them; things stuck up high in the air, serving for ornament, attracting observation, but sheltering nobody, warming nobody, helping nobody. It is not these great sermons that any man should propose to himself as models. Of course, if now and then in legitimate, honest, and manly work, you are in the right mood, and are brought into a state of excitement of which a great sermon is the result, preach it, and don't be afraid. But great sermons will come of themselves, when they are worth anything. Don't seek them; for that of itself is almost enough to destroy their value.

I do not say this for the purpose of abating one particle of your studiousness, or the earnestness with which you labour. I do not undertake to say that there may not be some indulgence at times in that direction; that is to say, if you have written a sermon that has done good, it may do good again. But I do say that, generally speaking, show-sermons are the temptation of the Devil. They do not lie in the plane of common, true Christian, ministerial work. They are not natural to a man whose heart is moved with genuine sympathy for man, and who is inspired in that sympathy by the fire of the Spirit of God. There is a false greatness in sermons as well as in men. Vanity, ambition, pedantry, are demons that love to clothe themselves in rhetorical garments, like angels of light!

In speaking of bringing to bear upon men a living force for their exaltation in the spiritual life, I want to call your attention to the very natural substitutes that men take for this. I know men of great learning—I could mention their names, and you would recognize them as men of great ability in their pastoral lives—men of the greatest breadth of thought, and really and interiorly men of profound emotion; but their ministry has never been very fruitful; that is, they have never moved either the multitudes, or, very largely, the individuals, of the community where they have been. I have thought I saw the reason of it in this: that their sympathy ran almost exclusively toward God.

They were on God's side altogether. They were always vindicating God. They were upholding the Divine government. And they produced, if I may say so, the feeling that they were God's attorneys, that they were special pleaders on that side. I would not say that a man should not be in sympathy with God, but it must be remembered that God Himself is in sympathy with sinful and erring men, that He broke down all the brilliance and glory of the heavenly estate that He might mingle Himself among them; and no preacher is the true agent of God, or really takes sides with God, who does not sympathize with men, but who simply holds up the majesty and sternness and power and glory of the Divine government.

I have seen men who all the while produced the impression, GOD—GOD—GOD; there was nothing in them that breathed of gentleness, sweetness, or sympathy—the very things that characterized Christ, and which were in Him the interpretation of the real interior Godhead; those things were absent from their ministry; and, if you will not misunderstand it, I would say that they failed because they had too exclusive a sympathy with God.

Then I have seen another class of men who were so constructed and educated that they had an intense sympathy with ideas, with organized thought, religious system, or philosophy; who studied profoundly, who constructed ably, who had much that was instructive in their work. But after all, while everybody felt the strength of their sermons, almost nobody was moved or changed by them. And I have seen ministers with not one quarter of this equipment really lift and inspire a congregation, producing an effect which, with a proper following up, might have been permanently crystallized into life and disposition.

There should be in you a strong sympathy with the intellectual elements of the ministry; but it should never overlie, and certainly should not absorb or impede, the more legitimate sympathy you are to have with men themselves. . . .

There never was such a manifestation of the willowiness of a man of absolute steel in disposition. He was one of stern personal identity; and yet, by the love of Christ and by the sympathy he had with men, he said—or would have said, had he spoken in modern English—"I know how to fit myself to every sinuosity and rugosity of every single disposition with which I have to



deal; you cannot find me a man so deep or so high, so blunt or so sharp, but I would take the shape of that man's disposition, in order to come into sympathy with him, if by so doing I could lift him to a higher and a nobler plane of life."

When I see men standing in the royalty of ordination, who have been made golden candlesticks of grace, who feel what is called "the dignity of their profession," and move up and down in life, neatly receiving the praise and deference of everybody round about them, and requesting men who pass to look upon God's ordained ministers, I think by contrast of Paul, with that diffusiveness that he gave himself, that universal adaptation of himself—who mothered everybody, wherever he went. There is not a thing so menial in the kitchen, there is not a thing so offensive to every sense, that the mother does not say, over her sick child, "Now let me do it; should the child die, it would be a grief to think that anybody did these things but me." The mother makes haste to do those most offensive things for her darling child because she loves it. And so the true man has that vital sympathy with men, that there is nothing that he would not become or do, if by so doing he could get hold of them and make better men of them, that, as Paul says, he may present them faultless before God.

Your work, therefore, as a Christian minister, let me say as the first point I want to make this afternoon, in addition to what I said yesterday, requires that you should, first of all, see to the elevation of character of the man that preaches. He it is who ought to blossom. You cannot become a good minister simply by being expert in theology. You cannot without it, either; theology must be practically or technically learned. But you cannot be a true preacher with this equipment alone. A dictionary is not literature, though there is no literature without the contents of the dictionary in it. You have got yourself to bring up to the ideal of the New Testament. A part of your preparation for the Christian ministry consists in such a ripening of your disposition that you yourselves shall be exemplars of what you preach. And by an exemplar I do not mean simply that you must be a man who does not cheat his neighbour, or who unites in himself all the scrupulosities of the neighbourhood; but a minister ought to be entirely, inside and out, a pattern man; not

a pattern man in abstention, but a man of grace, generosity, magnanimity, peaceableness, sweetness, though of high spirit, and self-defensory power when required; a man who is broad, and wide, and full of precious contents. You must come up to a much higher level than common manhood, if you mean to be a preacher. You are not to be a needle to carry a thin thread, and sew up old rags all your life long. That is not the thing to which you are called. You are called to be men of such nobleness and largeness and gentleness, so Pauline, and so Christlike, that in all your intercourse with the little children, and with the young people of your charge, you shall produce a feeling that they would rather be with the minister than any gentleman in the State—always fresh, always various, always intent on the well-being of others, well understanding them and their pleasures and sympathies, promoting enjoyment, promoting instruction, promoting all that is noble in its noblest form and purest Christlikeness—that is what it is your business to be.

Now, with that disposition and tendency well established in yourselves and your parishioners, my young friends, you will never lack for sermons. If your sermons are the reproductions simply of systematic theology, you will lack for them—thank God! You may have sermons on theology, on technical theology; do not suppose that I am undervaluing them. I am only undervaluing the idolatry of them. By theology I understand simply the philosophy of religion—accurate thinking, systematic, articulated thinking; and that I believe in—in its place.

But this I say, that there is no theology in the world that is anything more than an instrument. It is a mere tool to work with, an artillery to fight with. Sermons are mere tools; and the business that you have in hand is not making sermons, or preaching sermons—it is *saving men*. Let this come up before you so frequently that it shall never be forgotten, that none of these things should gain ascendancy over this prime controlling element of your lives, that you are to save men.

And the first thing you have to do is to present to them what you want them to be. That is, if you are to preach to them faith, the best definition you can give of faith is to exercise it. If you wish to teach them the nature of sympathy, take them by the hand. Talk with the young men, and let them get acquainted

with you; and they will soon find out what sympathy means. If you would explain what true benevolence is, be yourselves before them that which you want them to understand and imitate. What does the Apostle tell us? "Ye are our epistles, known and read of all men," said Paul; and he could say it, and so could the whole primitive church, and so can we yet today. If it were a good thing to do, I could pick out today the examples from my church, and say: "This is what I mean by zeal tempered with prudence; that is what I mean by the sweet forbearance of love; if you would see what disinterested kindness is, see there"; and the rest would all say, "Amen." That is certainly the law of the pew, and what is the law of the pew ought to be the law of the pulpit.

Christian ministers are to be, not men that pray four times a day, and wear black clothes and white cravats and walk with the consciousness that the whole universe is looking upon them. A minister is a live man. He is a large hearted man. If anywhere else he is deficient, he can not be deficient in heart.

Someone asked me yesterday, What was to be regarded as a proper call to the ministry? I reply, the possession of those qualities which make a good minister—good sense, good nature, good health, and downright moral earnestness. It is signally true, however, in this matter, "that many are called, but few are chosen." We need more manhood and less professionalism. Scholarship is good for little that does not enrich manhood. It is the man that is in you that preaches. When God calls He begins early, and calls through your parents. "Before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." Be sure that it is *you* that is called. It is evident that in many cases someone else was meant when certain persons hear a call. When God calls very loud at the time you are born, standing at the door of life, and says, "Quarter of a man, come forth!" that man is not for the ministry. "Half a man, come forth!" no; that will not do for a preacher. "Whole man, come!" that is *you*. The man must be a man, and a full man, that is going to be a true Christian minister, and especially in those things which are furthest removed from selfishness and the nearest in alliance with true divine love.

Sympathy with your people, insight of their condition, a study



of the moral remedies—this will give endless diversity and fertility to your subjects for sermons. He that preaches out of a system of theology soon runs his round and returns on his track. He that preaches out of a sympathy with living men will sooner exhaust the ocean or the clouds of water, than his pulpit of material. It is true that subjects must be studied, that principles must be traced, that facts must be collected and arranged, that books must be studied, that systems must be understood. But all this is far back of preaching. It is general preparation. Out of the stores thus accumulated one must select for sermons, on the principle that a physician selects remedies for the sick, or stewards provide food for the household, with an eye on the persons to be treated. Once again, your sermon should reflect the wants of the people. The wants of your people must set back into the sermon, and give to it depth, direction, and current. Preaching is sometimes word brooding; sometimes it is a flash of light to those in darkness; sometimes a basket of golden fruit to the hungry, a cordial to the comfortless—all to all—just as Christ is All in All! You will very soon come, in your parish life, to the habit of thinking more about your people and what you shall do for them than about your sermons and what you shall talk about. That is a good sign. Just as soon as you find yourself thinking, on Monday or Tuesday, “Now, here are these persons, or this class”—you run over your list and study your people—“what shall I do for them?” You will get some idea what you need to do. Sometimes it is to call men from their sins; sometimes to repress the malign; sometimes to encourage hope in the fainthearted; sometimes to instruct the understanding; sometimes to broaden men’s knowledge, and move them off of their prejudices. There are a thousand things to do.

A preacher is a carpenter, building a house. You ought to know, as the house goes up, what you shall do next. Or, if it be built, and you are to furnish the house, you are to determine what is to be its furniture, and how distributed. You will know that this room is not lighted, or that room is not warmed. Wherever you go among your people, you will, to use the mercantile figure, “be taking account of stock.” That will suggest an endless number of subjects, and these subjects will turn you back to the New Testament to see what you can find there; and

that will send you back to Nature, where you will see what is in God's other great revelation.

In this way you will grow fertile. You will not be troubled in looking for subjects on which to write sermons; your only trouble will be to find opportunities for delivering sermons. I know that some men are more fertile than others; but a sympathetic study of human life is a remedy for uniform theology.

The effect of this notion of preaching—preaching from sympathy with living men rather than from sympathy with any particular system of thought—upon the preacher's style will be very great. I have often heard ministers in private conversation, and said to myself, "Would to God you would do so in the pulpit!" But the moment they are in the pulpit they fall into their scholastic, artificial style, which runs through the whole ministerial life. A man will talk to you naturally, and say: "*I do wish you would come down tonight; the young people had the promise of your coming, and why won't you come?*"—sweet, natural, pleading, persuasive. Yet he will go into the desk, where prayer is to be made in a persuasive tone, and he will begin addressing the Lord with a drawling, whining falsetto in voice, and a worse falsetto in morals. He has thrown himself out of his proper self into a ministerial self—a very different thing! A man will stop you in the street and discourse with you there, and be just as limber and affable in his sentences, just as curt and direct and crisp and simple in conversational vernacular as anyone; and yet in the pulpit, two-thirds of what he has to say will be Latin periphrases woven together; three members on one side the sentence pivot, balanced by three members on the other, and that recurring all the time. This style is false to everything but books. It may be all in sympathy with them; but no man in earnest, talking to his fellow men with a purpose, falls into that artificial style. The man who preaches so that there shall be a naturalness in his style, that will be the best style for him. I have known men who would be excellent ministers, if it were not, first, for their lives; secondly, for their theology; and thirdly, for their style.

One other point. I was asked yesterday if I would say a few words as to "the call." I have already indicated a word as to the call for the ministry. Practically, it acts in this way. Young

men are sometimes brought up to it, as I was. I never had any choice about it. My father had eight sons. Only two of them ever tried to get away from preaching; and they did not succeed. The other six went right into the ministry just as naturally as they went into manhood. Therefore, so far as personal experience is concerned, I have nothing to say.

I have observed, however, in classes in college and elsewhere, that where young men have not been brought up to believe all through their childhood that they were to be ministers, they generally have the question brought to their minds in some serious mood, whether they ought to go into the law, or into medicine, or to be civil engineers, or whether they ought to go into the ministry. They think about it a good while, and at last it is borne in upon them, without any special reason, that they had better preach; and they resolve to do it. These are young men who ordinarily can not form judgments; they drift. When you look beyond this number, what are some of the elements that fit a man for the life of a true Christian minister?

I say, first, the preacher ought to be a man who is *fruitful in moral ideas*, has a genius for them, as distinguished from every other kind of ideas. We know what it is to have a genius for arithmetical or mathematical ideas, for musical ideas; or for æsthetic or art ideas. A tendency in the direction of moral ideas, whether developed or susceptible of being developed, is a prime quality.

A second quality fitting a man for the Christian ministry is the *power of moving men*. If a man is cold and unsympathetic, perhaps he may be able to make himself over; but if he can not, he had better not go into the ministry. It will be a hard task for such a one. But a man that has quick sympathy, apprehensiveness of men, intuition of human nature, has eminent qualifications for a minister. Every merchant, who is a true merchant, has to know how to deal with his customers. The moment they come into the store he reads them. A good jury lawyer must have the same aptitude. We are all the time obliged to use these qualities, the knowledge of men, the power of managing men. A real master of men, when one draws near to him, forms a judgment of the newcomer just as instinctively and as quickly as of a locomotive or a horse. (Do you ever see a fine horse go by and not



take his points? Then your education has been neglected.) A minister who walks down a whole street and sees nobody, who only looks inside of himself, is but half a minister. Self-absorption is permissible once in a while; but the aptitude to deal with men to incite the springs of human thought and feeling, the knowledge of how to move men—that is to be maintained in power only by incessant practice and observation; but if you have that in connection with the genius for moral ideas, you have two qualifications.

A third qualification is what I may call *living by faith*, the sense of the infinite and the invisible; the sense of something else besides what we see with the physical eyes; the sense of God, of eternity, and of heaven. If I were asked what had been in my own ministry the unseen source of more help and more power than anything else, I should say that my mother gave to me a temperament that enabled me to see the unseeable and to know the unknowable, to realize things not created as if they were, and oftentimes far more than if they were, present to my outward senses. The rain comes out of the great ether above. You see nothing of it tonight, though it is there, and descends tomorrow on the grass and the flowers; so out of the invisible realm of the spirit within which you are living under the crystalline dome of eternity, populous with love and law and truth you will have a sense of the vastness and magnitude of the sphere in which you are working which will descend upon your life with fructifying power.

Another thing: you should have good health; and a fair portion of common sense, which is the only quality that I think never is increased by education; that is born in a man—or, if it is not, that is the end. But if, with those other qualities, you have good sense and good vigorous health, and withal are of a good social disposition, you have the qualifications out of which a minister can be fashioned.

There is one thing more. I do not think that any man has a right to become a Christian minister, who is not willing and thankful to be the least of all God's servants and to labour in the humblest sphere. If you would come into the Christian ministry, hoping to preach such a sermon as Robert Hall would have preached, you are not fit to come in at all. If you have a deep

sense of sweetness of the service of Christ; if the blood of the redemption is really in your heart and in your blood; if you have tasted what gratitude means, and what love means, and if heaven is such a reality to you that all that lies between youth and manhood is but a step toward heaven; if you think that the saving of a single soul would be worth the work of your whole life, you have a call, and a very loud call. A call to the ministry is along the line of humility and love and sympathy and good sense and natural aspirations toward God.

## THE PERSONAL ELEMENT IN ORATORY

NO man ever preaches, all the time thinking of producing specific effects, without very soon being made conscious that men are so different from each other that no preaching will be continuously effective which is not endlessly various; and that not for the sake of arresting attention, but because all men do not take in moral teaching by the same sides of their minds. I remember when it was the custom, and it was supposed a proper thing to do, for ministers to hold up a regular system of moral truth, sermon by sermon, and chapter by chapter, until the received average views of the day had been spread out before the congregation; and then it was hoped that a Divine Sovereignty would apply these truths to men's hearts. Experience ought to have shown them that there is a class of hearers in every intelligent community that will never be led except through their reason. They will require that the path be laid down for them, and that they see it before they follow. They will not be content to receive the truth in any other mode than by the idea form. If they can not get it in one church, they will go to another; and if still they can not find it, they will go nowhere. Yet, if you shape your preaching, as often literary men in the pulpit are accustomed to do, to the distinctively intellectual men in the community, you will very soon fill them full and starve the rest of your congregation; because, right alongside of them, there are natures just as noble as theirs, but not accustomed to receive their food through the mouth of reason, except in an incidental and indirect way. We all use our reason, more or less, in all processes; but then there are a great many persons who want the truth presented in emotive forms.

The hard reasoner says: "No tears for me; don't colour your preaching; I want it pure as the beams of light, and as transparent; and the calmer and more inexorably logical its propositions, and the more mathematical its proof, the better I like it."



But there are in any community probably six to one who will watch for the emotional and impassioned part of the sermon, saying: "That is the preaching I want; I can understand what I feel." They are fed by their hearts. They have as much right to be fed by their hearts as the others have to be fed by their reason.

You should strive, in setting the table in your church, wherever you may be, to do as the hotel proprietor does. He never says to himself: "What dish do I like best?—that will I put on the table"; or, "What dishes do Lawyer A and Physician B like best?" He spreads his tables for the benefit of the community at large—something for everybody; and he does wisely. The man who means to catch men, and to catch all of them, must prepare bait for those that bite purely by the understanding, and just as much bait for those that bite largely by their emotions. But there is another class. I recollect my dear old father talking about persons that worshipped God in clouds and saw the hand of God in beauty. He would say: "It is all moonshine, my son, with no doctrine nor edification nor sanctity in it at all, and I despise it." I never knew my father to look at a landscape in his life, unless he saw pigeons or squirrels in it. I have seen him watch the stream, but it was, invariably, to know if there were pickerel or trout in it. He was a hunter, every inch; but I never could discern that he had an æsthetic element in him, so far as relates to pure beauty. Sublimity he felt. Whatever was grand he appreciated very keenly. I do not think that he ever looked at one building in his life, except the Girard College. When he came suddenly upon that, and it opened up to him, he looked up and admired it; and I always marvelled at that, as a little instance of grace in him.

It is not a vain thing to hear men say that they feel more like worshipping in music than in any other thing. The best organist in America for extemporaneous music is Mr. John Zundel. When he was converted, and came into the church, he said to me one morning: "It seems that everything in the world is new. Last night I prayed, but not as you do." I asked him what he meant, and he answered, "I do not speak my prayers." "Well," asked I, "how do you pray?" "On the piano always," said he. That was true. He would sit down at his piano, when in a worshipping

mood, shut his eyes and pray with his fingers. I did not wonder at it when I heard his music.

When I entered the first gallery of any magnitude in Europe, it was a revelation to me; I was deeply affected. It was at the Luxembourg. I had never imagined such a wealth of glory. The sense of exhilaration was so transcendent that I felt as if I could not stay in the body. I was filled with that supersensitiveness of supernal feeling which is true worship; and I never seemed to myself so near the gate of heaven. I never felt capable of so nearly understanding my Master; never in all my life was I conscious of such an earnestness to do His work, and to do it better than I did, as while under the all-pervading influence of that gallery of beauty.

I find a great many persons who say: "I do not much enjoy going to church, but if I am permitted to wander out into the fields, along the fringes of the forests, and to hear the birds sing, to watch the cattle, and to look at the shadows on the hills, I am sure it makes me a better man." Some others, like my dear old father, would say: "That is all moonshine; there is nothing in it, no thought, no truth, and no doctrine of edification." But there is truth in it. There are minds that open to spiritual things through that side of their nature more readily than through any other. This should be recognized.

Then there is another class. There are a great many persons who are keenly sensitive on the side of imagination, and they never really receive anything as true, until the fact or principle is, as it were, enveloped in a little haze. They need the mystic element. They do not want sharp outlines. There is something in mystery which is attractive to them. And yet some preachers insist that truth should be set before all men in its most accurate and exact form. You might just as well attempt to reduce the clouds to triangles and circles, in order to mathematically demonstrate their beauty to the eye of an artist.

Now, in order to reach and help all these varying phases of your congregation, you must take human nature as you find it, in its broad range. Understand this, that the same law which led the Apostle to make himself a Greek to the Greeks, and a Jew to the Jews, and to put himself under the law with those who were under the law; and that same everlasting good sense of

conformity in these things, for the sake of taking hold of men where they can be reached, and lifting them up, requires you to study human nature as it is, and not as people tell you it ought to be. If a man can be saved by pure intellectual preaching, let him have it. If others require a predominance of emotion, provide that for them. If by others the truth is taken more easily through the imagination, give it to them in forms attractive to the imagination. If there are still others who demand it in the form of facts and rules, see that they have it in that form.<sup>1</sup> Take men as it has pleased God to make them; and let your preaching, so far as concerns the selection of material, and the mode and method by which you are presenting the truth, follow the wants of the persons themselves, and not simply the measure of your own minds.

Too often men find a certain facility in themselves in single directions, and they confine their preaching to that particular line. The consequence is, their congregation are very soon classified. One sort of a preacher gets one sort of people, and another sort gets another sort of people, instead of all churches having some of every kind of mind in them. They become segregated and arranged according to ministers. That is very bad for the churches.<sup>2</sup>

It is a good thing for a village that it has but one church for

<sup>1</sup> S. Parkes Cadman's comment on Beecher's variety is worth quoting: "The aim of the sermon should be subject to the conditions which prevail in its delivery; and the charm of the delivery is in the power of its adaptation. I have known many a preacher who grew monotonous because when you heard him once you had heard him always. It was always the same well-ordered, stately discourse. Yet on occasions the people would have been thankful if instead of a Pullman train a freight had come thundering down! There was the explanation of Beecher's superiority. He always had a surprise in store. If he was philosophical in the morning he was inspirational at night. He would sometimes astonish his congregation by his austerity or again by his exquisite tenderness. Not everyone is capable of this kind of preaching."—S. Parkes Cadman, "Questions and Answers," *Effective Preaching*, Edited by G. Bromley Oxnam, p. 245 (New York, 1929).

<sup>2</sup> Compare this with Harry Emerson Fosdick's observation: "The sermon is selective; it appeals to a certain mental stratum; it automatically excludes from its range of interest other types of mind than the kind from which it comes. This is one reason why Protestant churches in America, centering their worship in a sermon, have so largely become class organizations—religious clubs appealing to a narrowly selected group of ideas and traditions."—"The Atlantic Monthly," January, 1929.



all the people; where the rich and poor, the cultured and the unlettered, have to come together, and learn to bear with each other. This is a part of that discipline and attrition which smooths and polishes men, and makes them better, if there is grace to do it. But in the cities you will find that churches are classified; and in the city of New York I can point out to you many a church in which there are almost no poor, plain people, but the great body are people of wealth, culture, and refinement; and the pulpit is invariably high-toned, perfectly pure in language, clear and methodical in discourse, always proper—so proper, in fact, that it is almost dead for want of life, for want of side branches, for want of adaptation and conformity to human nature as it is. It is under such circumstances, where a man follows a single groove in himself or in his congregation, and does it because he learns to work easier so, year by year—and it is really on that account—that preaching becomes narrowed down and very soon wears out.

It has been asked here, why pastors change so often. Preachers are too apt to set the truth before their congregations in one way only—whichever one they find they have the greatest facility for; and that is like playing on one chord—men get tired of the monotony. Whereas, preaching should be directed to every element of human nature that God has implanted in us—to the imaginative, to the highly spiritual, to the moral, to that phase of the intellectual that works up and toward the invisible, and to the intellectual that works down to the material and tangible.

He is a great man who can play upon the human soul! We think him a great artist, who can play on an organ with sixty stops, combining them infinitely, and drawing out harmony and melody, marching them through with grand thought, to the end of the symphony; that indicates a master, we think. It does; but what organ that man ever built does not shrink in comparison with the one that God built and called Man? Where you have before you a whole congregation or a whole community, and all their wants and needs are known, and you are trying to draw out of them a higher and nobler life, what an instrument you have to play upon, and what a power it is when you have learned it, and have the touch by which you can play so as to control its entire range and compass! There is nothing more sublime in

this world than a man set upon lifting his fellow men up toward Heaven, and able to do it. There are no sensations in this world comparable with those which one has whose whole soul is aglow, waking into the consciousness of this power. It is the Divine power, and it is all working up toward the invisible and the spiritual. There is no ecstasy like it.

There is another question which I have barely hinted at, and that is, in attempting to address the truth in different forms to men, so as to meet the wants of a whole community, must not a man be universal like Shakespeare? How can you expect men, taking them as they are, to do this?

My reasoning is this: It is not to be supposed that men will do it in perfection, that they will do it at once, or that they will ever more than approximate to the ideal. I shall have occasion to repeat every time I speak to you this thing—you have got to *learn your business*. It will take years and years before you are expert preachers. Let nobody puff you up by saying you are able preachers, because you can preach three or four good sermons. You have three or four tunes; that is all. You are not practised workmen until you understand human nature, and know how to touch it with the Divine truth; until you comprehend the Divine truth that is in Jesus to that which is in man; and, quite as often, can reverse the process. That is the study. You have not begun your education yet. You are but getting ready to study when you begin to preach. If you preach for five years, and find that your work is slow, and much of it obscure, and does not produce the results aimed at, do not be discouraged. The work is so great that you need not be ashamed, after working for years, to find that you are still an apprentice and not a journeyman.

The question, then, comes up: How far shall a man conform to the strong tendencies of his own nature?

One man is himself very imaginative, and not a reasoner; or, he finds himself possessed of a judicial mind, calm, clear, but not enthusiastic; while another finds himself an artist, as it were, with a mind expansive and sensitive, seeing everything iridescent, in all colours. Can these men change their own endowment; or, how can one conform to the endowment of the other?

A minister says: "I am naturally very sensitive to the praise

and opinion of men. When I speak I can't get rid of the feeling of myself. I am standing before a thousand people, and I am all the time thinking about myself—whether I am standing right, and what men are thinking of me. I can't keep that out of my mind." What is such a man to do? Can he change his own temperament?

On the other side, there are men who say: "I don't care what people think of me; I wish I cared more. I am naturally cold, somewhat proud, and self-sustained. People talk about sympathy and a warm side toward men, but I never feel any of that. I do what is right, if the heavens fall, and go on my way. If people like it, I am glad; and if they don't, that is their lookout." How can you change that disposition? How can a man alter the laws that are laid down for him?

Well, in one sense, he can not change at all. You can make just as many prayers, write just as many resolutions, and keep just as long a journal as you please, recording the triumphs of grace over your approbateness, and when you are screwed down in your coffin, you will have been no less of a praise-loving man than when you were taken out of the cradle. That quality grows, and it grows stronger in old age than at any other time. You will find that men get over some things in time; they become less and less imaginative; they become less severe as they grow older; but, if vanity is a part of their composition, old age only strengthens it, and they grow worse and worse as they grow in years. In general, too, if a man has a strong will, I do not think he loses any of it as he gets along through life. It becomes fixed, firm as adamant.

But it is not necessary that you should change much. Go and look at Central Park. Before the artistic hand of the landscape gardener began to work upon its surface, there were vast ledges of rock in every direction, and other obstructions of the most stubborn character. Now if, when the engineer came to look over the land for the purpose of laying it out into a beautiful park, he had said, "How under the sun am I going to blast out those rocks?" he would have had a terrible time of it, and would have been blasting until this day. Instead of that, however, he said: "I will plant vines around the edges of the rocks and let them run up over. The rocks will look all the better, and the



vines will have a place to grow and display their beauty. In that way I will *make use* of the rocks."

So it is with your own nature. There is not a single difficulty in it which you cannot make use of, and which, after that, would not be a power for good. Suppose you are conscious, in your disposition, of approbateness. Do you think you are more sensitive than thousands of God's best ministers have been? But perhaps you love the praise of men more than the praise of God. The thing for you to do, then, is to train your approbateness, so that, instead of delighting in the lower types of praise—those which imply weakness and which unman you—you will strive after those which rise steadily higher and higher in the things which are of God. Now, it is not your fault that you have the element of approbateness, but it is your fault that you suffer it to feed on despicable food. Train it to desire approbation for things that are noble and just, for doing, intensely, whatever is disinterested among men, and for things that other men can not do. Task yourselves as men should do, and not like boys or puling girls. Have such a conception of manhood in Christ Jesus that you would scorn praise for things that are less than noble. Strike a line through the head, and seek praise for things that are represented above the line and not below it.

You can not find a more beautiful or illustrious instance of the transformation of a great constitutional faculty than in Paul—Paul, the fiercely proud and arrogant, the man that was originally made for a persecutor. For, the moment the summer of Christ's love drew near and shone on him, he became a changed man. Although he moans and yearns in his teachings, and his letters are full of self-consciousness, yet it is all extremely noble. It is beautiful. I would not take a single "I" out of Paul's epistles; and yet you might take scores out of every one of them, and they would scarcely be missed, there are so many. Where was there a man whose pride was more regal than his? and what a power it was, and how he used it for Christ's sake!

In regard to strong constitutional peculiarities, I would say, therefore, that you can not eradicate them, and that you should not try to change them very much. You can regulate and discipline every one of your emotive powers; but do not try to quench them. Do not crucify your passions. Do not crucify

any basilar instinct. There is force in it, if you know how to use it as a force, in the propulsion of moral feeling and moral ideas. You may be naturally ambitious; you will be ambitious to the day of your death. Do not attempt to take away your constitutional endowment, only train it to things which are consonant with Divine sympathy and with true life. Make it work, not for yourself, but for others, and it will be a power that you need not be ashamed of. . . .

This whole necessity of self-use is provided as a school of education for every man, and especially may it be made efficient in the dissemination of the Gospel. He who gives his whole life force to the work of converting men unto Christ, will find, I think, that for a long time he scarcely will need anybody to tell him what to do and what to be. You must go into a parish and say to yourself: "There is not a man, woman, or child within the bounds of this parish to whom I am not beholden. I am to bring the force of my whole soul to bear upon these persons. I am to get thoroughly acquainted with them. I am to make them feel my personality. I am to prepare them to hear me preach by gaining their confidence outside of the church and pulpit." You must meet them in their everyday life, in their ruggedness and selfishness. You will find one man spoken of as a laughing stock in one neighbourhood, and another as an odious man in another. Nobody can be a laughing stock or odious to you, you are like physicians who attend the inmates of a hospital; it matters not to them from what cause the patients are lying hurt and wounded there. Sick men belong to the physician's care, and he must take care of them. Do not pick out the beautiful and good, or those who suit you. Select from your parish the men who *need* you most, and if you can not be patient with them, if you can not bring your soul to be a sacrifice for others and bear with them, how can you make them understand what Jesus Christ did for the world? You have got to do that same thing right over again at home, with the members of your church, with the outcast and with the wanderer. You must be, if I may say so, *little Christs*. You must make a living sacrifice of yourself again and again, against your instincts—humbling your pride, holding in desires, submitting to things you do not like, and doing things which are repugnant to your taste, for Christ's sake and

for man's sake; learning to love to do it; and so interpreting, by your personality, what it means for Jesus Christ to have made a sacrifice of Himself for the salvation of the world. What else did the Apostle mean by saying, "Christ in you"? And if He promises to abide in you, how can He abide in you in any other sense than that?

The next point I wish to make with you is, that if you are to be preachers in any such sense as this which I have explained to you, preaching will have to be your whole business. Now, in a small way, everybody preaches; but if you are going to be professional preachers, if you will make that your life calling, it is not probable that there is one of you who was built large enough to do anything more than that. It will take all that you have in you and all your time. I do not think a man could run a locomotive engine, paint pictures, keep school, and preach on Sundays to any great edification. A man who is going to be a successful preacher should make his whole life run toward the pulpit.

Perhaps you will say: "Are you not, yourself, doing just the other thing? Don't you edit a paper, and lecture, and make political speeches, and write this, that, and the other thing? Are you not studying science, and are you not *au fait* in the natural enjoyments of rural life?"

Well, where a man stands in the pulpit, and all the streams run away from the pulpit down to those things, the pulpit will be very shallow and very dry; but when a man opens these streams in the neighbouring hills as so many springs, and all the streams run down into the pulpit, he will have abundant supplies. There is a great deal of difference, whether you are working in the collaterals toward the pulpit, or away from the pulpit.

You can tell very quickly. If, when a man comes back from his garden, his lectures, his journeys, and his æsthetic studies, or from his scientific coteries and *seances*, he finds himself less interested in his proper work, if the Sabbath is getting to be rather a burdensome day to him, and it is irksome to be preaching, he must quit one or other of those things. The streams run from the pulpit instead of into it. But if, when a man feels he is called to be an architect of men, and artist among men, in moulding them; when one feels that his life power is consecrated to transforming the human soul toward the higher ideal of char-



acter for time and eternity, he looks around upon the great forces of the world and says to them, "You are my servants"; to the clouds, "Give me what you have of power"; to the hills, "Bring me of your treasures"; to all that is beautiful, "Come and put your garment upon me"; and to all that is enjoyable, "Fill me with force and give abundance to the fulness of my feeling"—if a man makes himself master of the secrets of nature that he may have power and strength to do his work—then he is not carrying on three or four kinds of business at the same time. He is carrying on *one business*, and he collects from a hundred the materials and forces by which he does it.

That is right. It will do you no hurt, but will benefit you, if you will make yourself familiar with public affairs. But you must not let public affairs settle down on you and smother you. You must keep yourself abreast of science; but you must be surer of your faith than science is of its details. You must see to it that you are the master of everything, and not it the master of you. If music is more to you than your duties, it is dangerous; but it ought to be a shame to you that it is dangerous. If genial society and the flow of social merriment is sweet to you, and it seduces you from your work, it is perilous—but it is a shame that these things should so easily overcome you. You ought to build yourselves on a pattern so broad that you can take all these things along with you. They are the King's; and you have a right to them. You have a right to be a child with children; the best fellow among young men. You have a right to all manly recreations, but you must see to it that you are stronger than the whole of them. You have a right to feel like other men, and to take part in all their interests, but you must be larger than them all. You must feel that you are charged with the realities of the great world that is hanging over our heads—and, my God, such a world! that never says anything; that keeps silence above us, while the destinies of the ages have been rolling onward; and where there are such things going on, that I marvel no sound ever drops down to us. But if a man lives and has seen Him that is invisible, and It that is invisible, all these lower things are open books unto him; and, instead of weakening, they become elements of strength and power.

A man may spend one half the strength of his life trying to

overcome obstacles that interpose between himself and men, which is absolutely unnecessary. I told Brother Storrs in his church edifice that, with all his splendid success, I thought one full third of his life was spent in overcoming the natural resistance of that church structure to the gospel; not because it was beautiful, for I think a beautiful church is a help, but because it was constructed on the principle of isolation or wide separation—as though a man should sit on one side of a river and try to win a mistress on the other side, bawling out his love at the top of his voice. However she might have been inclined, one such shout would be too much for tender sentiment.

Churches are built now on the same principle as they formerly were in the days of the founders of the old cathedrals. Then the services turned on the effect of music, and the production of awe by the shimmering lights, by the dimness and vagueness. They turned on the presentation of gorgeous apparel and all kinds of things for the eye to behold; but there was very little preaching, very little. Because they built their churches on a cruciform plan, we—who have revolutionized old theories, who believe that a church is a household, and that a preacher has a personal influence upon men, and is not a mere machine—build our churches just like them. You will see, in every cultivated community, churches built for modern preaching purposes on mediæval principles.

We will take the church in New York called the Broadway Tabernacle. In it there are two lines of columns which hide a range of six pews, on each side straight from the pulpit clear through to the corner of the church, where the men and women can not see the preacher on account of these architectural adjuncts which run up to the ceiling and make the church so beautiful. There the people can sit and look at the columns during the whole of the sermon time.

In Dr. Storrs's church in Brooklyn there was formerly a space of from fifteen to twenty feet between the pulpit and the pews. It has been changed. But formerly you could see the minister only down to his chest. He stood in that box, stuck up against the wall, and then came a great space, like the desert of Sahara; and over on the other side of it began to be his audience. Before he can fill such a space the magnetic influence of the man is all

lost. He has squandered one of the best natural forces of the pulpit.

That is not the worst of it. When a man is made by God he is made *all over*, and every part is necessary to each and to the whole. A man's whole form is a part of his public speaking. His feet speak and so do his hands. You put a man in one of these barrelled pulpits, where there is no responsibility laid upon him as to his body, and he falls into all manner of gawky attitudes, and rests himself like a country horse at a hitching post. He sags down, and has no consciousness of his awkwardness. But bring him out on a platform, and see how much more manly he becomes, how much more force comes out! The moment a man is brought face to face with other men, then does the influence of each act and react upon the other. I have seen workmen talking on the street, stooping, laughing, and slapping their hands on their knees. Why, their very gestures were a good oration, although I did not hear a word that was said. A man who speaks right before his audience, and without notes, will speak, little by little, with the gestures of the whole body, and not with the gestures of one finger only.

No man will speak long with any interest when he thinks about himself. You may have the very best of sermons, but if your boot pinches or you have a painful corn, you will think about the foot and about the corn, and not about the sermon. A man needs to be brought out of himself as much as possible. You must relieve him from all manner of external embarrassment. Put a man where he is liable, as I have been, standing on the head of a barrel at a political meeting, to go through, and what will he think of? Now, on a little narrow platform one *can* walk backward and forward to be sure, but if he go toward the edges ever so little, he is in fear of stumbling off. Yet even that is better than a box pulpit. What has that to do with preaching? What do you want with it? What is it for?

This evil is not confined to pulpits merely, but to all places where a speaker has to address a large body of men. I think the matter so important, that I tell the truth, and lie not, when I say that I would not accept a settlement in a very advantageous place, if I was obliged to preach out of one of those old-fashioned swallow's nests on the wall.



The next point you should look to is to have your pews as near as possible to the speaker. A preacher must be a man among men. There is a force—call it magnetism or electricity or what you will—in a man, which is a personal element, and which flows from a speaker who is *en rapport* with his audience. I do not say that Jonathan Edwards could not have preached under the pulpit disadvantage. He could have preached out of anything. But there are not many men like Jonathan Edwards. The average man needs all the extraneous advantages he can press into his service.

People often say, "Do you not think it is much more inspiring to speak to a large audience than a small one?" No, I say; I can speak just as well to twelve persons as to a thousand, provided those twelve are crowded around me and close together, so that they touch each other. But even a thousand people, with four feet space between every two of them, would be just the same as an empty room. Every lecturer will understand what I mean, who has ever seen such audiences and addressed them. But crowd your audience together, and you will set them off with not half the effort.

Brother Day, the son of old President Day, of Yale College, was one of my right hand men in founding the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn; and being a civil engineer, and the church having voted to build, he went into my study with me to plan the edifice. He asked me what I wanted, in the first place, and how many people I wanted the church to seat. I told him. "Very good," he said; "and how do you want them located?" "I want them to surround me, so that they will come up on every side, and behind me, so that I shall be in the centre of the crowd, and have the people surge all about me." The result is, that there is not a better constructed hall in the world for the purposes of speaking and hearing than Plymouth Church. Charles Dickens, after giving one of his readings in it, sent me special word not to build any other hall for speaking; that Plymouth Church was perfect. It is perfect, because it was built on a principle—the principle of social and personal magnetism, which emanates reciprocally from a speaker and from a close throng of hearers. This is perhaps the most important element of all the external conditions conducive to good and effective preaching.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*Would you recommend the hanging of one or two architects by court-martial?*

I do not know that a court-martial would be the proper tribunal by which to try them, but I would at least make them recite the Westminster Catechism every morning as a punishment. Architects, however, do a great deal of good work. They certainly help, by the exterior of churches, to beautify our towns and villages. But there is a certain thing that I never found an architect to be wise about—ventilation. I never knew anybody else who was. There is no difficulty in ventilating a house when there is nobody in it. The difficulty is to have a house full of people, and then to ventilate it. How can you get fresh air into a room, after letting out the bad air? Draughts will be caused, and people will take cold. That question architects have never been able to solve.

## XVIII

### THE STUDY OF HUMAN NATURE

NOW, the school of the future (if I am a prophet, and I am, of course, satisfied in my own mind that I am!) is what may be called a Life School. This style of preaching is to proceed, not so much upon the theory of the sanctity of the Church and its ordinances, or upon a pre-existing system of truth which is in the Church somewhere or somehow, as upon the necessity for all teachers, first, to study the strengths and the weaknesses of human nature minutely; and then to make use of such portions of the truth as are required by the special needs of man, and for the development of the spiritual side of human nature over the animal or lower side—the preparation of man in his higher nature for a nobler existence hereafter. It is a life school in this respect, that it deals not with the facts of the past, except in so far as they can be made food for the present and factors of the life that now is; but rather studies to understand *men*, and to deal with them, face to face and heart to heart—yea, even to mould them as an artist moulds his clay or carves his statue. And in regard to such a school as that, while there has been much done incidentally, the revised procedure of education yet awaits development and accomplishment; and I think that our profession is in danger, and in great danger, of going under, and of working effectively only among the relatively less informed and intelligent of the community; of being borne with, in a kind of contemptuous charity, or altogether neglected, by the men of culture who have been strongly developed on their moral side—not their moral side as connected with revealed religion, but as connected rather with human knowledge and worldly wisdom. The question, then, comes up, Do men need this intimately practical instruction? and if so, must there be to meet it this life school of preachers? . . .

We need to study human nature, in the first place, because it illustrates the Divine nature, which we are to interpret to men.



Divine attribute corresponds to our idea of human faculty. The terms are analogous. You cannot interpret the Divine nature except through some knowledge of human nature. There are those who believe that God transcends men, not simply in quality and magnitude, but in kind. Without undertaking to confirm or deny this, I say that the only part of the Divine nature that we can understand is that part which corresponds to ourselves, and that all which lies outside of what we can recognize is something that never can be interpreted by us. It is not within our reach. Whatever it may be, therefore, of God, that by searching we can find out, all that we interpret, and all that we can bring, in its moral influence, to bear upon men, is in its study but a higher form of human mental philosophy.

Now, let us see what government is. It is the science of managing men. What is moral government? It is moral science, or the theory upon which God manages men. What is the management of men, again, but a thing founded upon human nature? So that to understand moral government you are run right back to the same necessity. You must comprehend that on which God's moral government itself stands, which is human nature.

But, again, the fundamental doctrine on which our labours stand is the need of the transformation of man's nature by the Divine Spirit. This is altogether a question of psychology. The old theological way of stating man's sinfulness, namely, "Total Depravity," was so gross and so indiscriminating, and was so full of endless misapprehensions, that it had largely dropped out of use. Men no longer are accustomed, I think, to use that term as once they did. That all men are sinful, is taught; but "what is meant by 'sinful'?" is the question which immediately comes back. Instantly the schools begin to discuss it. Is it a state of the fibre of the substance or the soul? Is it any aberration, any excess, any disproportion of natural elements? Wherein does the fault lie? What is it? The moment you discuss this, you are discussing human nature. It is the mind you are discussing. In order to know what is an aberration, you must know what is normal. In order to know what is in excess, you must know what is the true measure. Who can tell whether a man is selfish, unless he knows what is benevolent? Who can tell whether a man has departed from the correct idea, unless he

has some conception of that idea? The very foundation on which you stand today necessitates knowledge of man as its chief basis.

Consider, too, how a minister, teaching the moral government of God, the nature of God, and the condition of man and his necessities, is obliged to approach the human soul. Men are sluggish, or are so occupied and willed with what are to them important interests, that, ordinarily, when a preacher comes into a community, he finds it either slumbering, or averse to his message or indifferent to it; and, in either case, his business is to stimulate the moral nature. But how shall he know the art of stimulating man's moral nature, who has never studied it? You must arouse men and prepare them to be moulded. How can you do it if you know nothing about them?

A man who would minister to a diseased body must have an accurate knowledge of the organs, and of the whole structure of the body, in a sanitary condition. We oblige our physicians to know anatomy and physiology. We oblige them to study morbid anatomy, as well as normal conditions. We say that no man is prepared to practise without this knowledge, and the law interferes, or does as far as it can, to compel it. Now, shall a man know how to administer to that which is a thousand times more subtle and important than the body, and which is the exquisite blossom of the highest development and perfection of the human system, namely, the mind in its modern development—shall he assume to deal with that, and raise and stimulate it, being ignorant of its nature? A man may know the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, he may know every theological treatise from the day of Augustine to the day of Dr. Taylor, and if he does not understand human nature, he is not fit to preach. . . .

If I might be allowed to criticise the general theological course, or to recommend anything in relation to it, I should say that one of the prime constituents of the training should be a study of the human soul and body from beginning to end. We must arouse and stimulate men, and seek to bring them into new relations with truth, with ourselves, and with the community. . . .

With this general statement of the necessity of the study of the human nature and mind in its structure and functions, I will pass on to the next point, which is the way in which this study is to be prosecuted. How are we going about it?

In the first place, you must study facts, scientifically. I think that such works as Bain's, while criticisable in many directions, are nevertheless works of very great interest as showing a wise tendency in the investigation of the mind of man—the founding of mental philosophy upon physiology. I do not commend the system in all its particulars, but I speak of its tendency, which is in the right direction. I would say the same, also, of Herbert Spencer's works. There is much in him that I believe will be found sovereign and noble in the final account of truth, when our knowledge of it is rounded up. There was never a field of wheat that ripened, which did not have a good deal of straw and husk with it. I doubt not but Herbert Spencer will have much straw and husk that will need to be burned. Nevertheless, the direction he is moving in is a wise one, which is the study of human nature, of the totality of man.

It was believed once that man did not think by the brain. I believe that notion has gone by. Most men now admit that the brain is the organ of the mind. It is held that it cannot be partitioned off into provinces, and that there are no external indications of its various functions. I shall not dispute that question with you. It is now generally conceded that there is an organization which we call the nervous system in the human body, to which belong the functions of emotion, intelligence, and sensation, and that that is connected intimately with the whole circulation of the blood, with the condition of the blood as affected by the liver and by aeration in the lungs; that the manufacture of the blood is dependent upon the stomach. So a man is what he is, not in one part or another, but all over; one part is intimately connected with the other, from the animal stomach to the throbbing brain; and when a man thinks, he thinks the whole trunk through. Man's power comes from the generating forces that are in him, namely, the digestion of nutritious food into vitalized blood, made fine by oxygenation; an organization by which that blood has free course to run and be glorified; a neck that will allow the blood to flow up and down easily; a brain properly organized and balanced; the whole system so compounded as to have susceptibilities and recuperative force; immense energy to generate resources and facility to give them out. All these elements go to determine what a man's working power



is. And shall a man undertake to study human nature, everything depending upon his knowledge of it, and not study the prime conditions under which human nature must exist?

I have often seen young ministers sit at the table, and even those of sixty years of age, eating out of all proportion, beyond the necessities of their system; and I have seen, on the other hand, ministers who ate below the necessities of their systems, under a vague impression that sanctifying grace wrought better on an empty stomach than on a full one. It seems to me that all Divine grace and Divine instruments honour God's laws everywhere; and that the best condition for grace in the mental system is that in which the human body is in a perfect state of health. That is a question which every man can best settle for himself. Some men under-sleep, and some over-sleep; some eat too much, and some too little. Some men use stimulants who do not need them, while others avoid them who need them, and would be better for their use. There is a vast amount of truth relative to the individual that is not studied by the minister, though it ought to be, as to the incoming and the outflow of force. Some clergymen prepare themselves to preach on Sunday by sitting up very late on Saturday night, and exhausting their vitality, thus compelling themselves to force their overtasked powers to extraordinary exertion to perform their Sabbath duties; which entails upon them the horrors of Blue Monday, the result of a spasmodic and drastic excitement. It is, and it ought to be, a purgatory to them. You must study yourselves as men. Is there no self-knowledge that can be acquired, so that a man shall know how to be merciful to his beast?

You see that whatever relates to the whole organization of the human body and its relations to health and to perfect symmetry must be studied, for all these relations are intimate, and concern both your own working powers and the material among men that you will have to work on.

In studying mental philosophy after this fashion I would not have you ignore metaphysics. The perceptions of those subtle relations, near and remote, specific and generic, that obtain among spiritual facts of different kinds, I understand to be metaphysics; and that, I suppose, must be studied. I think it sharpens men, and renders them familiar with the operations of

the human mind, if not carried too far, and gives them a grasp and penetration that they would not get otherwise. It is favourable to moral insight, when developed in connection with the other sides of human nature. While I say that you ought to study mental philosophy with a strong physiological side to it, I do not wish it to be understood that I deery mental philosophy with a strong metaphysical side to it.

There is one question beyond that. The importance of studying both sides of mental philosophy for the sake of religious education is one point; but when the question comes up *how* to study mental philosophy, I do not know anything that can compare in facility of usability with phrenology. I do not suppose that phrenology is a perfect system of mental philosophy. It hits here and there. It needs revising, as, in its present shape, it is crude; but nevertheless when it becomes necessary to talk to people about themselves, I know of no other nomenclature which so nearly expresses what we need, and which is so facile in its use, as phrenology. Nothing can give you the formulated analysis of mind as that can. Now let me say, particularly, a few things about this, and personally, too. I suppose I inherited from my father a tendency or intuition to read man. The very aptitude that I recognize in myself for the exercise of this power would indicate a pre-existing tendency. In my junior college year I became, during the visit of Spurzheim, enamoured of phrenology. For twenty years, although I have not made it a special study, it has been the foundation on which I have worked. Admit, if you please, it is not exactly the true thing; and admit, if you will, that there is little form or system in it; yet I have worked with it much as botanists worked with the Linnæan system of botany, the classification of which is very convenient, although an artificial one. There is no natural system that seems to correspond to human nature so nearly as phrenology does.

For example, you assume that a man's brain is the general organ of the spiritual and intellectual functions.

I see a man with a small brow and big in the lower part of his head, like a bull, and I know that that man is not likely to be a saint. All the reasoning in the world would not convince me of the contrary, but I would say of such a man, that he had very intense ideas, and would bellow and push like a bull of

Bashan. Now, practically, do you suppose I would commence to treat with such a man by flaunting a rag in his face? My first instinct in regard to him is what a man would have, if he found himself in a field with a wild bull, which would be to put himself on good manners, and use means of conciliation, if possible.

On the other hand, if I see a man whose forehead is very high and large, but who is thin in the back of the head, and with a small neck and trunk, I say to myself, That is a man, probably, whose friends are always talking about how much there is in him, but who never does anything. He is a man who has great organs, but nothing to drive them with. He is like a splendid locomotive without a boiler.

Again, you will see a man with a little bullet-head, having accomplished more than that big headed man, who ought to have been a strong giant and a great genius. The bullet-headed man has outstripped the broad-browed man in everything he undertook; and people say, "Where is your phrenology?" In reply, I say, "Look at that bullet-headed man, and see what he has to drive his bullet-head with!" His stomach gives evidence that he has natural forces to carry forward his purposes. Then look at the big headed man. He can't make a spoonful of blood in twenty-four hours, and what he does make is poor and thin. Phrenology classifies the brain regions well enough, but you must understand its relations to physiology, and the dependence of brain work upon the quantity and quality of blood that the man's body makes.

You may ask, "What is the use of knowing these things?" All the use in the world. If a person comes to me, with dark, coarse hair, I know he is tough and enduring, and I know that, if it is necessary, I can hit him a rap to arouse him; but if I see a person who has fine silky hair and light complexion, I know that he is of an excitable temperament, and must be dealt with soothingly. Again, if I see one with a large blue watery eye, and its accompanying complexion, I say to myself that all Mount Sinai could not wake that man up. I have seen men of that stamp, whom you could no more stimulate to action, than you could a lump of dough by blowing a resurrection trump over it.

Men are like open books, if looked at properly. Suppose I attempt to analyze a man's deeds; I can do it with comparative



facility, because I have in my eye the general outline of the man's disposition and mental tendencies. A deed is like a letter stamped from a die. The motive that directs the deed is like the matrix that moulds the stamp. You must know what men are, in order to reach them, and that is a part of the science of preaching. If there is any profession in the world that can afford to be without this practical knowledge of human nature, it certainly is not the profession of a preacher.

While I urge the study of man from the scientific side, let me say, also, that this study is not enough, and that what we need is not simply this elementary analytical knowledge. We must study human nature for constructive purposes, also. That is the difference between a true preacher and an incompetent one.

The lawyer must study human nature, in order to get at the facts of his case; the merchant, for the sake of his own profits; the politician, for the sake of carrying out certain political ends; but these do not imply that men are to be made better or worse. A minister studies human nature for the purpose of *regenerating men*. We study men as florists do flowers, when they wish to change them from simple blossoms into rare beauties. The object of the florist is to make them larger, to enhance their colour or fragrance, or whatever other change is desired. It is to make more out of human nature than we originally find in it, that we are studying it and training it.

You must be familiar with men; and you are fortunate if you have been brought up in a public school. There is a good deal of human nature learned by boys among boys, and by young men among young men. That is one of the arguments in favour of large gatherings of young men. A man who has struggled out from between the stones of the farm, and has fought his way through the academy, with the pity of everybody—a pity which might well be spared, because it was God's training—has a fine education for practical life, because he knows men. The study of man is the highest of sciences.

Besides this general knowledge we are to have, we should take kindly to individual men, for the very purpose of studying them. Now, I take great delight, if ever I can get a chance, in riding on the top of an omnibus with the driver, and talking with him. What do I gain by that? Why, my sympathy goes out for these

men, and I recognize in them an element of brotherhood—that great human element which lies underneath all culture, which is more universal and more important than all special attributes, which is the great generic bond of humanity between man and man. If ever I saw one of those men in my church, I could preach to him, and hit him under the fifth rib with an illustration, much better than if I had not been acquainted with him. I have driven the truth under many a plain jacket. But, what is more, I never found a plain man in this world who could not tell me many things that I did not know before. There is not a gatekeeper at the Fulton Ferry, or an engineer or deck hand on the boat, that I am not acquainted with, and they help me in more ways than they know of. If you are going to be a minister, keep very close to plain folks; don't get above the common people.

There is no danger that you will lose your sympathy with culture and refinement, as some people seem to fear. There is no danger that you will lose your purity and sensitiveness. There will be nothing incompatible in this course with the performance of your professional duties as a preacher. Goodheartedness and good, plain hearty sympathy with men will help everything in you which ought to be helped, and diminish those things which ought to be diminished. Study human nature by putting yourself in alliance with men. See how a mother, that best of philosophers in practical matters, understands every one of her children and the special differences between them all; and does she not carry herself with true intuition as to their daily needs, and with the interpreting philosophy of sensitive love? She is the best trainer of men, and has the best mental philosophy, so far as practical things are concerned.

There is but one other point. While you study men scientifically, in regard to the fundamental elements of human nature, and again by sympathies and kindly relations to individuals to learn them well, you must be much among them, generally. You must act with men. Learn to be needful to them and to use them. A minister who stays in his study all the week long, and makes his appearance only in his pulpit to preach, may do some good, of a certain sort; but the preacher must be a man among men. Keep out among the people. I do not mean to say that you ought to make a great many pastoral visits, but that society

—men, women, and children, of all sorts—ought to be your continual and familiar acquaintances. Books alone are not enough. Studying is not enough. There is a training for you in the actual daily contact with men, of mind with mind, which will keep you down, and you will not have so much professional pride. You will find many men abler than you, and a good many men who are better qualified to teach grace to you than you are to teach them. You will often find how very superficial has been your teaching to men. No man will find a better study than where the drooping heart is laid bare to him; or where the ever flashing intelligence is acting in his presence. There you can see what your work has been, and what it is to be in the future. . . .

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*How far should a preacher imitate the example of Christ, and give utterance to truths which are disagreeable to the hearer?*

No rule whatever can be given in regard to that. Whatever provocation arises from the preacher's manner or untowardness, of course, is blameworthy in him. If he will speak truths meet for persons to hear, let him learn "speaking the truth in love." Instruct in meekness those who oppose you, for peradventure God shall give them repentance. And if you are speaking the truth, it is essential that those who hear you believe you are sincere before you can work with them.

But manner is much. In the early abolition days two men went out preaching, one an old Quaker, and another a young man full of fire. When the Quaker lectured, everything ran along very smoothly, and he carried the audience with him. When the young man lectured, there was a row, and stones, and eggs. It became so noticeable that the young man spoke to the Quaker about it. He said, "Friend, you and I are on the same mission, and preach the same things; and how is it that while you are received cordially I get nothing but abuse?" The Quaker replied, "I will tell thee. Thee says, 'If you do so and so, you shall be punished,' and I say, 'My friends, if you will not do so and so, you shall not be punished.'" They both said the same things, but there was a great deal of difference in the way they said it.



## XIX

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WORKING ELEMENTS

**D**IFFERENT personal temperaments and habits may have very much to do with your mode of preaching; and the ever open question comes up, "Shall I write my sermons, or shall I extemporize?" That depends, to a very considerable extent, upon a man's temperament. If he be extremely sensitive and fastidious by nature, and, withal, somewhat secretive and cautious, it would frequently be almost impossible for him to extemporize with fluency. Sometimes men are so oppressed under the influence of an audience that they can not possibly think in its presence. Drill and long habit may alter this; but still, if it is rooted in a man's nature, he may never conquer it. And after all, the real thing for him to do is to *preach*, and whether he write his sermon or speak it without writing, let him see that he trains himself to do his work. This question is the same as asking, "Is it best for a man who is going hunting to take out cartridge shells already leaded for his gun, or shall he take loose ammunition and load with powder and shot, according to circumstances, every time he is going to shoot?" Now that is a fair question, and there is a great deal to be said on the subject. But, after all, the man who goes where the game is, always finding it and bringing it home with him, is the best hunter; and I care not whether he carry fixed or loose ammunition. That is the best cat that catches the most rats. And in your case that will be the best form of sermon that does the work of a sermon the best. If you can do best by writing, write your sermons; and if you can do better by not writing, do not write them. . . .

The first element on which your preaching will largely depend for power and success, you will perhaps be surprised to learn, is *Imagination*, which I regard as the most important of all the elements that go to make the preacher. But you must not understand me to mean the imagination as the creator of fiction, and

still less as the factor of embellishment. The imagination in its relations to art and beauty is one thing; and in its relations to moral truth it is another thing, of the most substantial character. Imagination of this kind is the true germ of faith; it is the power of conceiving as definite the things which are invisible to the senses—of giving them distinct shape. And this, not merely in your own thoughts, but with the power of presenting the things which experience can not primarily teach to other people's minds, so that they shall be just as obvious as though seen with the bodily eye.

Imagination of this kind is a most vital element in preaching. If we presented to people things we had seen, we should have all their bodily organism in our favour. My impression is, that the fountain of strength in every Christian ministry is the power of the minister himself to realize God present, and to present Him to the people. No ministry can be long, various, rich and fruitful, I think, except from that root. We hear a great deal about the breadth of the pulpit, and about the variety of the pulpit, and about carrying the truth home to men's hearts. I have said a great deal to you about it, and shall say more. I claim that the pulpit has a right and a duty to discuss social questions—moral questions in politics, slavery, war, peace, and the intercourse of nations. It has a right to discuss commerce, industry, political economy; everything from the roof tree to the foundation stone of the household, and everything that is of interest in the State. You have a duty to speak of all these things. There is not so broad a platform in the world as the Christian pulpit, nor an air so free as the heavenly air that overhangs it. You have a right and a duty to preach on all these things; but if you make your ministry to stand on them, it will be barren. It will be rather a lectureship than a Christian ministry. It will be secular and will become secularized. The real root and secret of power, after all, in the pulpit, is the preaching of the invisible God to the people as an ever present God. The preacher, then, must have the greatness of God-power in his soul; and when he is himself inspired with it—and filled with it so familiarly that always and everywhere it is the influence under which he looks out at man, at pleasure, at honour, and at all the vicissitudes of human life—still standing under the shadow of God's presence,

he has the power of God with man when he comes to speak of the truths of the gospel as affecting human procedure. This power of conceiving of invisible things does not only precede in point of time, but it underlies, and is dynamically superior to, anything else.

Now, imagination is indispensable to the formation of any clear and distinct ideas of God the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost. For myself, I am compelled to say that I must form an ideal of God through His Son, Jesus Christ. Christ is indispensable to me. My nature needs to fashion the thought of God, though I know Him to be a Spirit, into something that shall nearly or remotely represent that which I know. I hold before my mind a glorified form, therefore; but, after all the glory, whatever may be the nimbus and the effluence around about it, it is to me the form of a glorified man. And I therefore fashion to myself, out of the spirit, that which has to be, as it were, a Divine presence and a Divine being, namely, a Divine man. . . .

But this imagination is required still more vividly in the second step, namely, the power to throw out your conceptions before others, and such a preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ as shall bring Him home to your hearers. How will you undertake to do this? You will have the little children to deal with. You will have persons of great practical sense, but of very little imagination, if any. You will have persons of a wayward, coarse temperament, and again others of a fine, sensitive nature. You will have those who take moral impressions with extreme facility, and who understand analogies and illustrations; and you will have others who understand nothing of this kind. These persons you must imbue with a sense of Christ's presence with them. This is the prime question in your ministerial life—how to bring Jesus Christ home to men, so that He shall be to them what He is to you. You may present Christ to them historically, and far be it from me to say that you must not put great emphasis upon the historical study of Christ; but you must remember that Christ, as He was eighteen hundred years ago, interpreted by the letter, is not a living Christ. It is an historical picture, but it is not a live Christ. Thence must you get your materials, out of which to make the living faith. Many a minister believes that after he has been delivering a series of sermons on the life and



times of Christ, he has been preaching Christ. He has been merely preaching about Him, not preaching Him. There is many a minister who has been preaching the philosophy of Christ; that is, a view of Christ in which with infinite refinements and cultured arguments, he makes Him one of the persons in the Trinity—who is jealous for His honour, exactly discriminating where the line of infinity comes down and touches the line of finity, and pugnacious all along that line—and then thinks that he has been preaching Christ. Some ministers think that they have been preaching Christ when they have been discoursing about the relations of Christ to the law, the nature of His suffering upon Divine law, and on the Divine sense of justice. They work out of the life and times of Christ, and out of His sufferings and death, a theory of Atonement, or, as it is called, a “Plan of Salvation,” and present that to men, and then they think they have presented Christ.

Now I am not saying that you should not discuss such themes, but only that you should not suppose in so doing you have been preaching Christ. You can not do it in that way. To preach Christ is to make such a presentation of Him as shall fill those who hear you. They must be made to conceive it in themselves, and He must be to them a live Saviour, as He is to you. One of the noblest expressions of Paul is where he exclaims, “Christ who died, yea, rather, who *liveth*,” as if he bounded back from the thought of speaking about Christ as dead. He is one who liveth again and reigneth in the heavens over all the earth.

There is danger of a mistake being made here. You might ask me if you ought not to preach atonement. Yes. Ought you not, also, to preach the nature, sufferings, and death of Christ? Yes, provided you will not suppose you understand more than you really do on these subjects. There is much in that direction that may contribute to instruction; but it seems to me that what you need, what I need, and what the community needs, is that, in a world full of penalty, where aches, pains, tears, sighs, and groans bear witness to Divine justice—where, from the beginning, groanings and travailings have testified that God is an avenger—there shall be brought out from this discouraging background the truth of the gospel, that God *loves* mankind, and would not that they die. He is the God that shall wipe away the tears from

every eye. He is the God that shall put out with the brightness of His face the light of the sun and of the moon. He shall put His arm around about men, and comfort them as a mother her child. That is the love of God in Christ Jesus. With this we would stimulate men when they are sluggish, would develop their better natures, give them hope in a future life, cheer them onward in the path of duty, and give them confidence in immortality and eternity; for in God we live and move, and have our being.

The imagination, then, is that power of the mind by which it conceives of invisible things, and is able to present them as though they were visible to others. That is one of its most transcendent offices. It is the quality which of necessity must belong to the ministry. The functions of the preacher require it. In godly families it was, formerly, the habit to discourage the imagination, or to use it only occasionally. They misconceived its glorious functions. It is, I repeat, the very marrow of faith, or that power by which we see the invisible and make others see it. It is the power to bring from the depths the things that are hidden from the bodily eye. A ministry enriched by this noble faculty will not and can not wear out, and the preacher's people will never be tired of listening to him. Did you ever hear anybody say that spring has been worn out? It has been coming for thousands of years, and it is just as sweet, just as welcome, and just as new, as if the birds sang for the first time; and so it will be for a thousand years to come. These great processes of nature that are continually recurring can not weary us. But discussions of the systems of theology will. Men get accustomed to repetitions of the same thoughts; but there is something in the love of God and Jesus Christ, and in the application of these things to the human soul, that will give an ever varying freshness to a ministry which occupies itself with the contemplation and teaching of this law of love, and applying the knowledge to all the varying wants and shifting phases of the congregation. Even though you are forty years in one parish, you will never have finished your preaching, and you will not tire your people.

The next element that I shall mention is that of *Feeling*. There is a great deal of natural emotion in New Englanders, but much of it is suppressed. It is not the habit of people in our Eastern States to show feeling nearly as much as in the South, nor as

much as in the West. The New Testament, however, is Oriental, and the Orientals always had, and showed, a great deal of emotion. The style of the Apostles' procedure shows that they had a great deal of fervency, which is only another term for emotional outplay.

If a man undertake to minister to the wants of his congregation purely by the power of feeling, without adequate force in the intellect, there are valid objections to that; but every man who means to be in affinity with his congregation must have feeling. It cannot be helped. A minister without feeling is no better than a book. You might just as well put a book, printed in large type, on the desk where all could read it, and have a man turn over the leaves as you read, as to have a man stand up, and clearly and coldly recite the precise truth through which he has gone by a logical course of reasoning. It has to melt somewhere. Somewhere there must be that power by which the man speaking and the man hearing are unified; and that is the power of emotion.

It will vary indefinitely in different persons. Some will have much emotion, and some but very little. It is a thing to be striven for. Where there is relatively a deficiency, men can educate themselves and acquire this power.

Now one of the great hindrances to the exhibition of true Christian feeling in the pulpit is that which I hear called the "dignity of the pulpit." Men have been afraid to lay that aside, and bring themselves under the conditions necessary for the display of emotion. Now and then they will have a sublime, religious tone of feeling at a revival. But, after all, there is a vast amount of feeling playing in every man's mind, which is a very able element in preaching. It may be intense, earnest, pathetic, or cheerful, and gratifying, and is the result of love to God and God's creatures. If a man desires to preach with power, he must have this element coming and going between him and his hearers; he must believe what he is saying, and what he says must be out of himself, and not out of his manuscript merely. If a man can not be free to speak as he feels, but is thinking all the time about the sacredness of the place, it will shut him up. He will grow critical. I think the best rule for a man in society—and it is good for the pulpit too—is to have right aims, do the



best things by the best means you can find, and then let yourself alone. Do not be a spy on yourself. A man who goes down the street thinking of himself all the time, with critical analysis, whether he is doing this, that, or the other thing—turning himself over as if it were a goose on a spit before a fire, and basting himself with good resolutions—is simply belittling himself. This course is bad also in the closet.

There is a large knowledge of one's self that every man should have. But a constant study of one's own morbid anatomy is very discouraging and harmful. It is the power of being free and independent in their opinions that men want, and they must get it in some way or other. Having right aims, be manly; know that you mean right, that you will do right by the right way; then let go, and do not be thinking of yourself, if you can help it, from sunrise to sunset. A man must go into the pulpit with this spirit. Let him know what he wants, and let him be able to say, "God knows what sends me here today." Let his heart be right with God. When he is working for men and among them, if it is best for him to write, let him write; but it is better, for the most successful work, that he should not stand up and recite merely. You know what you can do only when the sacred fire is upon you. You have no time then for analyzing the effect upon yourself in any minute way.

Many men go into the pulpit fresh from the mirror, cravatted and in perfect toilet, with the sanctity of the place weighing upon them, and everything complete and proper. They know if there is the slightest aberration; and under all this there is a profound self-consciousness. They are shocked if any man, in such a place, does that which creates the slightest discord with their awful solemnity, or breaks the sanctity of the pulpit. Now, according to my own principles, when a man is a messenger of God, and knows that men are in danger, and believes that he is sent to rescue them, he must be lost in the enthusiasm of that work. Do you suppose he can stop his feelings from being manifested by any system of pulpit routine? If he is naturally correct and makes no mistakes, so much the better, for I do not think that mistakes are *desirable*; but there may be a "propriety" in his preaching that will damn half his congregation, or there may occasionally be almost an "impropriety" that will hurt nobody,

and, accompanied with the right manner, will save multitudes of men. If it is for anything, it is to *save men* that you are going into the ministry. If you do not go for that, you would better stay out.

Men often think that excitements are dangerous. Yes; everything is dangerous in this world. From the time that a man is born into the world until he leaves it, it is always possible that there might be danger coupled with everything he does. There is a danger that your feeling may be too boisterous, or of too coarse a nature, or that it will not be adapted to the wants of the congregation; all these things are to be taken into consideration. But there is no danger from excitement that is half so fearful as the danger of not feeling and not caring. The want of feeling is a hundred times more dangerous than any excitement that you can bring to bear upon a community.

There is another force which I desire to speak of, and that is the element of *Enthusiasm*. This is not feeling, because pure emotion may or may not be accompanied by enthusiasm. There is in all, enthusiasm and feeling; or, it may be, enthusiasm and imagination; or it may be, enthusiasm and reason. In almost all communities enthusiasm stands before everything else in moving popular assemblies. A preacher who is enthusiastic in everything he does, in all that he believes, and in all the movements of his ministry, will generally carry the people with him. He may do this without enthusiasm, but it will be a slow process, and the work will be much more laborious. If you have the power of speech and the skill of presenting the truth, and are enthusiastic, the people will become enthusiastic. People will take your views, because your enthusiasm has inoculated them. Very often you will see a man of great learning go into a community and accomplish nothing at all; and a whipster will go after him with not as much in his whole body as his predecessor had in his little finger, yet he will revolutionize everything.

You may say that a community aroused by enthusiasm alone will just as quickly relapse into their former state. Yes; but I do not counsel enthusiasm alone. The mistake is in permitting any such relapse. It is the same as though you ploughed a field and then left it for the rain to level again. You must not only plough it, but sow seed, harrow, and till it. Yet it is essential

that the field should be ploughed. So it is with a community. Mere enthusiasm will do nothing permanent; but its work must be followed up by continual and fervent preaching, and by indoc-trination of the truths of the gospel. I repeat, therefore, that enthusiasm is an indispensable element in a minister's work among men, to bring them a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The other element that I wish to discuss is *Faith*, in the sense of *belief*. I do not mean now by faith what I did in the other instance, namely, the realization of the invisible, but the believing spirit which you must have—the conviction of what you teach. A man who does not believe what he is preaching will very seldom make his people believe it; and, therefore, I say if your minds are much in doubt in respect to the grounds or the great truths of Christianity, and if you are thinking about that all the time, you will never be preachers. You must get rid of that feeling. You can get over it by bringing yourselves to deal with the wants of men, and accustoming yourselves to practical life. There is no study like mixing with men, and helping them. There is nothing that will make you believe in God so much as trying to be like God yourselves to your fellow men, nor anything that will bring Christ so near to you as trying to do what Christ did, by giving up your will for your people, and conforming yourself to their dispositions, and presenting to them everything you have realized in respect to the great doctrines of Christianity. I do not understand how men can preach these doctrines, who are occupied all week in raising questions of doubt. There is abroad a habit of mind which is called “constructive criticism” by philosophers, which is now prevalent in Germany, and somewhat so in England, and is even throwing its shadow upon our own land, and exciting men's minds. A man under that influence is, as it were, congealed, and loses his electrical power, by which only a man preaches with any effect. There was something almost omnipotent and altogether triumphant in the expression, “I know in whom I believe.” A man who is the very embodiment of conviction, and who pours it out upon people so that they can see it and feel it, can preach. He can make men believe things that are true, and even those that are not true, such as that ordinances are indispensable which are not indispensable. He can do almost everything with people, for he really believes



his own doctrine. See Roman Catholic priests go into a community—and there are many of them that might be our exemplars in piety and self-denial—and with that intense faith and zeal which have made them martyrs among savages, see them labour among people, and lead them into the fold of the Roman Church. That is largely the result of the Faith-power.

If you are going to preach, do not take things about which you are in doubt to lay before your people. Do not *prove* things too much. A man who goes into his pulpit every Sunday to prove things gives occasion for people to say, "Well, that is not half so certain as I thought it was." You will, by this course, raise up a generation of chronic doubters, and will keep them so by a little drilling in the nice refinement of doctrinal criticism. You can drive back from the heart the great surges of faith with that kind of specious argument, and even the true witness of the Spirit of God in men may be killed in your congregation by such doubting logic. Do not employ arguments any more than is necessary, and then only for the sake of answering objections and killing the enemies of the truth; but in so far as truth itself is concerned, preach it to the consciousness of men. If you have not spoiled your people, you have them on your side already. The Word of God and the laws of truth are all conformable to reason and to the course of things that now are; and, certainly, everything that is required in a Christian life—repentance for sin and turning from it, the taking hold of a higher manhood, the nobility and disinterestedness of man—goes with God's Word and laws naturally. Assume your position, therefore; and if a man say to you, "How is it you are so successful while using so little argument?" tell him that is the very reason of your success. Take things for granted, and men will not think to dispute them, but will admit them, and go on with you and become better men than if they had been treated to a logical process of argument, which aroused in them an argumentative spirit of doubt and opposition.<sup>1</sup>

Remember, then, Imagination, Emotion, Enthusiasm, and Conviction are the four foundation stones of an effective and successful ministry.

<sup>1</sup> See discussion, p. 43.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*Suppose a man tries to work himself up to a feeling of enthusiasm by action and increased emphasis, can he be successful?*

In regard to that, I will mention a circumstance that occurred to my father. I recollect his coming home in Boston one Sunday, when I was quite a small boy, saying how glad he was to get home, away from the church; and he added, "It seems to me I never made a worse sermon than I did this morning." "Why, father," said I, "I never heard you preach so loud in all my life." "That is the way," said he, "I always holloa when I haven't anything to say!"

But how far a man may assume the language of feeling—and he may sometimes, in order to its production—is a fair question, though one I do not now wish to discuss. There is some difference in the questions by gray hairs and those put by young men, I notice. (The questioner was an elderly man.) I am sure of one thing, and that is, where a man is naturally cold he is not as well adapted to the office of preaching as an enthusiastic man. I would say to such a man: "Put yourself in that situation in which sympathy naturally flows; then provide a mould for it, and it will fit the mould first or last." It is just like the cultivation of right feeling in any direction. One of my parishioners will say to me: "I have no benevolence, but you preach that I ought to give—what shall I do?" I say to him: "*Give*, as a matter of duty, until you feel a pleasure in doing it, and the right feeling will come of itself." So, in addressing a congregation, a man may use the language of a feeling for the sake of getting and propagating the feeling. Indeed, when it comes to preaching, I think it would be a great deal better to act as though you had the feeling, even if you had not, for its effect in carrying your audience whither you wish to carry them.

## RHETORICAL DRILL AND GENERAL TRAINING

THERE is, in certain quarters, a prejudice existing against personal training for preaching, in so far as it is affected by posture, gestures, and the like. There is a feeling abroad in regard to it, as though it would make a dramatic art out of that which should be a sacred inspiration. Men exclaim: "Think of Paul taking lessons in posturing and gesticulation, or of St. John considering beforehand about his robes and the various positions that he should assume!" They say: "Let a man who is called of God go into his closet, if he would prepare; let him be filled with his subject and with the Holy Ghost, and he need not think of anything else."

But suppose a man should stutter, and you should tell him to go into his closet and be filled with the Holy Ghost, would it cure his stuttering? Suppose a clergyman is a great, awkward, sprawling fellow, do you suppose he can pray himself into physical grace? You do not think that the call of the Divine Spirit is a substitute for study and for intellectual preparation. You know that a man needs academical or professional education in order to preach his best. But the same considerations that make it wise for you to pass through a liberal education, make it also wise for you to pass through a liberal drill and training in all that pertains to oratory.

It is, however, a matter of very great importance what end you seek by such training. If a man is attempting to make himself simply a great orator, if his thought of preaching is how to present the most admirable presence before the people, and how to have tones that shall be most ravishing and melting, and if he consider the gesture that is appropriate to this and that sentence—in short, if he studies as an actor studies, and as an actor properly studies, too—he will make a great mistake, for what are the actor's ends are but the preacher's means. On the other hand, as a man's voice is that instrument by which the



preacher has to perform his whole work, its efficiency is well worthy of study. For instance, the voice must be elastic, so that it can be used for long periods of time without fatigue; and the habitual speaker should learn to derive from it the power of unconscious force. There is just as much reason for a preliminary systematic and scientific drill of the voice as there is for the training of the muscles of the body for any athletic exercise. A man often has, when he begins to preach, a low and feeble voice, each one of his sentences seems like a poor scared mouse running for its hole, and everybody sympathizes with the man as he is hurrying through his discourse in this way, rattling one word into the other. A little judicious drill would have helped him out of that. If his attention can be called to it before he begins his ministry, is it not worth his while to form a better *habit*? A great many men commence preaching under a nervous excitement. They very speedily rise to a sharp and hard monotone; and then they go on through their whole sermon as fast as they can, never letting their voices go above or below their false pitch, but always sticking to that, until everybody gets tired out, and they among the rest.

If a man can be taught in the beginning of his ministry something about suppleness of voice and the method of using it, it is very much to his advantage. For example, I have known scores of preachers who had not the slightest knowledge of the explosive tones of the voice. Now and then a man falls into it "by nature," as it is said; that is, he stumbles into it accidentally. But the acquired power of raising the voice at will in its ordinary range, then explosively, and again in its higher keys, and the knowledge of its possibilities under these different phases, will be very helpful. It will help the preacher to spare both himself and his people. It will help him to accomplish results almost unconsciously, when it has become a habit, that could not be gained in any other way.

There are a great many effects in public speaking that you must fall into the conversational tone to make. Every man ought to know the charm there is in that tone, and especially when using the vernacular or idiomatic English phrases. I have known a great many most admirable preachers who lost almost all real sympathetic hold upon their congregations because they were too

literary, too periphrastic, and too scholastic in their diction. They always preferred to use large language, rather than good Saxon English. But let me tell you, there is a subtle charm in the use of plain language that pleases people, they scarcely know why. It gives bell notes which ring out suggestions to the popular heart. There are words that men have heard when boys at home, around the hearth and the table, words that are full of father and of mother, and full of common and domestic life. Those are the words that afterwards, when brought into your discourse, will produce a strong influence on your auditors, giving an element of success; words which will have an effect that your hearers themselves can not understand. For, after all, simple language is loaded down and stained through with the best testimonies and memories of life. Now, being sure that your theme is one of interest, and worked out with thought, if you take language of that kind, and use it in colloquial or familiar phrases, you must adapt to it a quiet and natural inflection of voice—for almost all the sympathetic part of the voice is in the lower tones and in a conversational strain—and you will evoke a power that is triumphant in reaching the heart, and in making your labours successful among multitudes.

But there is a great deal besides that. Where you are not enforcing anything, but are persuading or encouraging men, you will find your work very difficult if you speak in a loud tone of voice. You may fire an audience with a loud voice, but if you wish to draw them into sympathy and to win them by persuasion, and are near enough for them to feel your magnetism and see your eye, so that you need not have to strain your voice, you must talk to them as a father would talk to his child. You will draw them, and will gain their assent to your propositions, when you could do it in no other way, and certainly not by shouting.

On the other hand, where you are in eager exhortation, or speaking on public topics, where your theme calls you to denunciation, to invective, or anything of that kind, the sharp and ringing tones that belong to the upper register are sometimes well nigh omnipotent. There are cases in which by a single explosive tone a man will drive home a thought as a hammer drives a nail; and there is no escape from it. I recollect, on one occasion, to have heard Dr. Humphrey, President of Amherst College,

who certainly was not a rhetorician, speaking in respect to the treatment of the Indians. He used one of the most provincial of provincialisms, yet it came with an explosive tone that fastened it in my memory; and not only that, but it gave an impulse to my whole life, I might say, and affected me in my whole course and labour as a reformer. It was the effect of but a single word. He had been describing the shameful manner in which our government had broken treaties with the Indians in Florida and Georgia, under the influence of Southern statesmanship. He went on saying what was just and what was right, and came to the discussion of some critical point of policy which had been proposed, when he suddenly ceased his argument, and exclaimed, "The voice of the people will be lifted up, and they shall say to the government, YOU SHA'N'T!" Now "sha'n't" is not very good English, but it is provincial, colloquial, and very familiar to everybody. It carried a home feeling with it, and we all knew what it meant. He let it out like a bullet, and the whole chapel was hushed for the moment, and then the rustle followed which showed that the shot had struck. It has remained in my memory ever since.

All these various modes of drilling the voice are very important. They give the power to use it on a long strain without tiring it; to use it from top to bottom, so as to have all the various effects, and to know what they are; and to make it flexible, so that you have a ready instrument at your will. These are very important elements to a man who is going to be a preacher. You say: "Yes, I suppose a man ought to take some lessons in regard to these things, but he need not make it a study." I beg your pardon, gentlemen, don't touch it unless you are going to make thorough work of it. No knowledge is really *knowledge* until you can use it without knowing it. You do not understand the truth of anything until it has so far sunk into you that you have almost forgotten where you got it. No man knows how to play a piano who stops and says, "Let me see, that is B, and that is D," and so on. When a man has learned and mastered his instrument thoroughly, he does not stop to think which keys he must strike, but his fingers glide from one to the other mechanically, automatically, almost involuntarily. This subtle power comes out only when he has subdued his instrument and forgotten him-



self, conscious of nothing but the ideas and harmonies which he wishes to express.

If you desire to have your voice at its best, and to make the best use of it, you must go into a drill which will become so familiar that it ceases to be a matter of thought, and the voice takes care of itself. This ought to be done under the best instructors, if you have the opportunity; if not, then study the best books and faithfully *practise* their directions. It was my good fortune, in early academical life, to fall into the hands of your estimable fellow citizen, Professor Lovell, now of New Haven, and for a period of three years I was drilled incessantly (you might not suspect it, but I was) in posturing, gesture, and voice culture. His manner, however, he very properly did not communicate to me. And manner is a thing which, let me here remark, should never be communicated or imitated. It was the skill of that gentleman that he never left a manner with anybody. He simply gave his pupils the knowledge of what they had in themselves. Afterwards, when going to the seminary, I carried the method of his instructions with me, as did others. We practised a great deal on what was called "Dr. Barber's System," which was then in vogue, and particularly in developing the voice in its lower register, and also upon the explosive tones. There was a large grove lying between the seminary and my father's house, and it was the habit of my brother Charles and myself, and one or two others, to make the night, and even the day, hideous with our voices, as we passed backward and forward through the wood, exploding all the vowels, from the bottom to the very top of our voices. I found it to be a very manifest benefit, and one that has remained with me all my life long. The drill that I underwent produced, not a rhetorical manner, but a flexible instrument, that accommodated itself readily to every kind of thought and every shape of feeling, and obeyed the inward will in the outward realization of the results of rules and regulations.

In respect to the preservation of the voice there is but little to be said, except this, that a good, healthy man, who maintains wholesome habits, keeps his neck tough, treats his head and chest daily with cold affusions, and does not exhaust himself unnecessarily in overstrained speech, should not find it difficult to main-

tain his voice in a healthy condition, and that through life. I will not go into that obscure subject of minister's bronchitis. I never had it, and therefore know nothing of it, for which I thank God. If you have it, or are threatened with it, it is rather for your physician than for an unskilled person to give you directions about it. But, generally, a healthy body and a careful prudence in the exercise of the voice will, I think, go far to make you sound speakers during the whole of your lives.

It is not necessary that a man should stand awkwardly because it is natural. It is not necessary that a man, because he may not be able to stand like the statue of Apollo, should stand ungracefully. He loses, unconsciously, a certain power; for, although he does not need a very fine physical figure (which is rather a hindrance, I think), yet he should be pleasing in his bearing and gestures. A man who is very beautiful and superlatively graceful sets people to admiring him; they make a kind of monkey god of him, and it stands in the way of his usefulness. From this temptation most of us have been mercifully delivered. On the other hand, what we call naturalness, fitness, good taste, and propriety are to be sought. You like to see a man come into your parlour with, at least, ordinary good manners and some sense of propriety, and what you require in your parlour you certainly have a right to expect in church. One of the reasons why I condemn these churns called pulpits is that they teach a man bad habits; he is heedless of his posture, and learns bad tricks behind these bulwarks. He thinks that people will not see them.

So with gestures. There are certain people who will never make many gestures, but they should see to it that what they do make shall be graceful and appropriate. There are others who are impulsive, and so full of feeling that they throw it out in every direction, and it is, therefore, all the more important that their action shall be shorn of awkwardness and constrained mannerism. Now and then a man is absolutely dramatic, as, for instance, John B. Gough, who could not speak otherwise. It is unconscious with him. It is inherent in all natural orators; they put themselves at once, unconsciously, in sympathy with the things they are describing. In any of these situations, whether you are inclined to but little action or a great deal, or even to

dramatic forms of action, it is very desirable that you should drill yourselves and practise incessantly, so that your gestures shall not offend good taste. This, too, is a very different thing from practising before a mirror, and it is a very different thing from making actors of yourselves. It is an education that ought to take place early, and which ought to be incorporated into your very being.



## XXI

### RHETORICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

**I** BELIEVE it was Locke who inveighed against Illustrations as the enemies of truth, as leading men astray by latent or supposed analogies; and yet I apprehend that the strictest and most formal processes of logical reasoning have led just as many men astray as ever illustrations did. You can perplex people, and you can, with great facility, make ingenious issues with illustrations; but so you can with everything else. They are liable to misuse, but no more than any other instrument of persuasion. If a man knows truth and loves it, if he is earnest in the inculcation of it, and if he never allows himself to state for truth that which he does not thoroughly believe to be true, the processes which he employs, whether analogies, causal reasoning, or illustrations the most poetical, will participate in the honesty of the man; and there is little risk that any one part will be mistaken more than any other.

We have the best example of the use of illustration in the history of the education of the world from time immemorial. Experience has taught that not only are persons pleased by being instructed through illustration, but that they are more readily instructed thus, because, substantially, the mode in which we learn a new thing is by its being likened to something which we already know. This is the principle underlying all true illustrations. They are a kind of covert analogy, or likening of one thing to another, so that obscure things become plain, being represented pictorially or otherwise by things that are not obscure and that we are familiar with. So, then, the groundwork of all illustration is the familiarity of your audience with the thing on which the illustration stands. Now and then it will be proper to lay down and explain with particularity the fact out of which an illustration is to grow, and then to make the fact illustrate the truth to be made clear. The speaker will, for instance, undertake to explain the isochronism of a watch, and having done this

so that the audience will understand it, he may employ the watch in that regard as an illustration. But, generally, the subject matter of an illustration should be that which is familiar to the minds of those to whom you are speaking.

It is not my province to go into the theoretical nature of the different kinds of illustration, of metaphors, similes, and what not; that you have learned in another department, both in your academical and collegiate courses. But I hope to give you some practical hints as to the manner of using these things.

The purpose that we have in view in employing an illustration is to help people to understand more easily the things that we are teaching them. You ought to drive an audience as a good horseman drives a horse on a journey, not with a supreme regard for himself, but in a way that will enable the horse to achieve his work in the easiest way. An audience has a long and sometimes an arduous journey when you are preaching. Occasionally the way is pretty steep and rough; and it is the minister's business, not so much to take care of himself, as, by all the means in his power, to ease the way for his audience and facilitate their understanding. An illustration is one of the means by which the truth that you teach to men is made so facile that they receive it without effort. I know that some men—among whom, I think, was Coleridge—justify the obscurities of their style, saying that it is a good practice for men to be obliged to dig for the ideas they get. But I submit to you that working on Sunday is not proper for ordinary people in church, and obliging your parishioners to dig and delve for ideas in your sermons is making them do the very work you are paid a salary to do for them. Your office is to do the chief part of the thinking and to arrange the truth, while their part is to experience the motive power, and take the incitement toward a better life. In this work, whatever can make your speech touch various parts of the mind in turn will be of great advantage to your audience, and will enable them to perform their rugged journey with less fatigue and with more pleasure. An illustration is never to be a mere ornament, although its being ornamental is no objection to it. If a man's sermon is like a boiled ham, and the illustrations are like cloves stuck in it afterwards to make it look a little better, or like a bit of celery or other garnish laid around on the edge for the mere

delectation of the eye, it is contemptible. But if you have a real and good use for an illustration, that has a real and direct relation to the end you are seeking, then it may be ornamental, and no fault should be found with it for that.

Look a little at the result to be accomplished by facile and skillful illustrations. In the first place, they are helpful in all that part of preaching which is naturally based upon pure reasoning, and which is somewhat obscure to minds not trained in philosophical thought. There ought to be in every sermon something that shall task your audience somewhat as it tasked you; otherwise you will not compass some of the noblest themes that lie in the sphere of your duty. But pure ratiocination addresses itself to but a very small class of the community. There are very few men who can follow a close argument from beginning to end; and those who can are trained to it, it being an artificial habit, though, of course, some minds are more apt for it than others. But the theme must be very familiar, and the argument must be largely a statement of facts, for most audiences to understand it. If you go one step beyond this, into philosophy or metaphysics, so called, as you must do sometimes, you will be in danger of leaving half your audience behind you.

Illustrations, while they make it easier for all, are absolutely the only means by which a large part of your audience will be able to understand at all the abstruse processes of reasoning. For a good, compact argument, without illustrations, is very much like the old fashioned towers that used to be built before artillery was invented; they were built strong, of stone, all the way up above a ladder's reach without a door or a window-slit. The first apartment was so high that it was safe from scaling, and then came a few windows, and very narrow ones at that. Such were good places for beleaguered men, but they were very poor places to bring up a family in, where there were no windows to let in the light.

Now an illustration is a window in an argument, and lets in light. You may reason without an illustration; but where you are employing a process of pure reasoning and have arrived at a conclusion, if you can then by an illustration flash back light upon what you have said, you will bring into the minds of your audience a realization of your argument that they can not get in



any other way. I have seen an audience, time and again, follow an argument, doubtfully, laboriously, almost suspiciously, and look at one another, as much as to say, "Is he going right?"—until the place is arrived at, where the speaker says, "It is like ——" and then they listen eagerly for what it is like; and when some apt illustration is thrown out before them, there is a sense of relief, as though they said, "Yes, he is right." If you have cheated them, so much the worse for you; but if your illustrations are as true as your argument, and your argument true as the truth itself, then you have helped them a great deal. So that, as a mere matter of help to reason, illustrations are of vast utility in speaking to an audience.

Then they are a very great help in carrying away and remembering the things your audience have heard from you; because it is true from childhood up (and woe be to that man out of whom the child has died entirely!) that we remember pictures and parables and fables and stories. Now, if in your discourses, when taking a comprehensive view of truth, you illustrate each step by an appropriate picture, you will find that the plain people of your congregation will go away, remembering every one of your illustrations. If they are asked, "Well, what was the illustration for?" they will stop and consider: "What was he saying then?" They will fish for it, and will generally get the substance of it. "O, it was this; he was proving so and so, and then he illustrated it by this." They will remember the picture; and, if they are questioned, the picture will bring back the truth to them; and after that they will remember both together. Whereas all except the few logically trained minds would very soon have forgotten what you had discoursed upon, if you had not thus suitably seasoned it.

Your illustrations will be the salt that will preserve your teaching and men will remember them.

The effect of illustrations upon ideality is very great. They bring into play the imaginative faculty, which is only another name for ideality. The sense of the invisible and of the beautiful are combined in ideality. Now all great truth is beautiful. It carries in it elements of tastes and fitness. The "beauty of holiness" we find spoken of in the Word of God, and this is a beauty that does not belong to anything material. God is transcendently

a lover of beauty, and all the issues of the Divine Soul are, if we could see them as He sees them, beautiful, just as self-denial and love are beautiful, and as purity and truth and all good things are beautiful.

It is not, therefore, in the interest of truth that a man should sift it down to the merest bare nugget of statement that it is susceptible of; and this is not best for an audience. It is best that a truth should have argument to substantiate it, and analysis and close reasoning; yet when you come to give it to an audience you should clothe it with flesh, so that it shall be fit for their understandings. In no other way can you so stir up that side of the mind to grasp your statements and arguments easily, and prepare it to remember them. You can not help your audience in any other way so well as by keeping alive in them the sense of the imagination, and making the truth palpable to them, because it is appealing to the taste, to the sense of the beautiful in imagery as well as to the sense of truth.

It is a great art to know how long to preach as long as you want to, or have to, and yet not tire your audience, especially where you have been preaching many years in the same place. For my own part I do not think that a very long sermon is adapted to edification; but a man ought to be able to preach an hour, and to hold his audience too. He can not do it, however, if his sermon is a monotone, either in voice or in thought. He can not do it unless he is interesting. He can not possibly hold his people unwearied, when they have become accustomed to his voice, his manner, and his thoughts, unless he moves through a very considerable scale, up and down, resting them; in other words, change the faculties that he is addressing. For instance, you are at one time, by statements of fact, engaging the perceptive reason, as a phrenologist would say. You soon pass, by a natural transition, to the relations that exist between facts and statements, and you are then addressing another audience, namely, the reflective faculties of your people. And when you have concluded an argument upon that, and have flashed an illustration that touches and wakes up their fancy and imagination, you are bringing in still another audience—the ideal or imaginative one. And now, if out of these you express a sweet wine that goes to the emotions and arouses their feelings, so that one and another in

the congregation wipes his eyes, and the proud man, that does not want to cry, blows his nose—what have you done? You have relieved the weariness of your congregation by enabling them to listen with different parts of their minds to what you have been saying.

If I were to stand here on one leg for ten minutes, I should be very grateful if I were permitted to stand on the other a little while. If I stood on both of them, perfectly erect, I should be glad to have the opportunity of resting more heavily on one, and taking an easy position. In other words, there is nothing that tires a man so much as standing in one posture, stock still. By preaching to different parts of the minds of your audience, one part rests the others; and persons not wearied out will listen to long sermons and think them very short. It is a good thing for a man to preach an hour, and have his people say, "Why, you ought not to have stopped for an hour yet." That is a compliment that you will not get every day, and you ought to be very grateful when you do get it.

The relation of illustrations to a mixed audience is another point which deserves careful consideration. I have known ministers who always unconsciously sifted their audience, and preached to nothing but the bolted wheat. Now, you have got a little fine flour in your congregation, and more poor flour; then you have the Graham flour, which is the wheat ground up, husk and all; and then you have all the unground wheat, and all the straw, and all the stubble. You are just as much bound to take care of the bottom as you are of the top. True, it is easier, after you have fallen into the habit of doing it, to preach to those people who appreciate your better efforts. It is easier for you to preach so that the household of cultured and refined people will love to sit down and talk with you on this subtle feeling, and about that wonderful idea you got from the German poet, and so on. But that is self-indulgence, half the time, on the part of the pastor. He follows the path that he likes, the one in which he excels, and he is not thinking of providing for the great masses that are under his care.

You are bound to see that *everybody gets something every time*. There ought not to be a five-year-old child that shall go home without something that pleases and instructs him.



How are you going to do that? I know of no other way than by illustration.

I have around my pulpit, and sometimes crowding upon the platform, a good many of the boys and girls of the congregation. I notice that, during the general statements of the sermon and the exegetical parts of it, introducing the main discourse, the children are playing with each other. One will push a hymn book or a hat toward the other, and they will set each other laughing. That which ought not to be done is, with children, very funny and amusing. By and by I have occasion to use an illustration, and I happen to turn round and look at the children, and not one of them is playing, but they are all looking up with interest depicted on their faces. I did not think of them in making it, perhaps, but I saw, when the food fell out in that way, that even the children were fed too. You will observe that children in the congregation will usually know perfectly well whether there is anything in the sermon for them or not. There always ought to be, and there is no way in which you can prepare a sermon for the delectation of the plain people, and the uncultured, and little children, better than by making it attractive and instructive with illustrations. It is always the best method to adopt with a mixed audience.

And that is the kind of audience for which you must prepare yourselves, too. It is only now and then that a man preaches in a college chapel, where all are students. You are going into parishes where there are old and young and middle-aged people, where there are working men and men of leisure, dull men and sharp men, practised worldlings, and spiritual and guileless men; in fact, all sorts of people. And you are to preach so that every man shall have his portion in due season, and that portion ought to be in every sermon, more or less. You will scarcely be able to do it in any other way than by illustration. If God has not given you the gift by original endowment, strive to attain it by cultivation.

Then there is another thing. You are to carry the thoughts in your sermon as the air or theme is carried in some musical compositions. Certain of the finest chorals will have the air carried throughout, sometimes by the soprano, sometimes by the contralto, sometimes by the tenor, and sometimes by the bass.

So with your argument; it must be borne by different parts of your sermon. Sometimes it must be put forward by an illustration, sometimes by an appeal to the feelings, sometimes by a process of reasoning, and sometimes by the imagination. Your argument is not to be all one stereotyped expression of thought.

Frequently a speaker will make a statement, and then laboriously lay out the track from that statement clear over to the next point, thus using up precious time. But there is such a thing as striking at once to a man's conscience by bounding over the whole logical process, abbreviating both space and time, and gaining conviction.

What do you want? You do not want an argument for the sake of an argument. You do not want a sermon that is as perfect a machine as a machine can be, unless it *does* something. You want the people; and the shortest and surest way to get them is the best way. When you are preaching a sermon which has been prepared with a great deal of care, and are laying down the truth with forcible arguments, you will often find that you are losing your hold on the attention of your people by continuing in that direction. But coming to a fortunate point, strike out an illustration which arouses and interests them—leave the track of your argument, and never mind what becomes of your elaborate sermon, and you will see the heavy and uninterested eyes lighting up again. "But," you say, "that will make my sermon unsymmetrical." Well, were you called to preach for the sake of the salvation of sermons? Just follow the stream, and use the bait they are biting at, and take no heed of your sermon.

You will find it almost impossible to carry forward the demonstration of a truth in one straight course and yet make it real to a general audience. You must vary your method constantly, and at the same time through it all you can carry the burden of your discourse so that it shall be made clear to the whole of your audience. An argument may as well move forward by illustration as by abstract statement; sometimes it will go better.

Then there is another element for you to consider. Illustrations are invisible tactics. A minister often hovers between the "ought to do," and the "how to do." He knows there is a subject that ought to be preached about; and yet, if he should deliberately preach on that topic, everybody would turn around

and look at Mr. A., who is the very embodiment of that special vice or fault or excellence.

There are many very important themes which a minister may not desire to preach openly upon, for various reasons, especially if he wish to remain in the parish. But there are times when you can attain your object by an illustration pointed at the topic, without indicating whom you are hitting, but continuing your sermon as though you were utterly unconscious of the effect of your blow.

When I was settled at Indianapolis, nobody was allowed to say a word on the subject of slavery. They were all red-hot out there then; and one of the Elders said: "If an abolitionist comes here, I will head a mob to put him down." I was a young preacher. I had some pluck; and I felt, and it grew in me, that that was a subject that ought to be preached upon; but I knew that just as sure as I preached an abolition sermon they would blow me up sky high, and my usefulness in that parish would be gone. Yet I was determined they should hear it, first or last. The question was, "How shall I do it?" I recollect one of the earliest efforts I made in that direction was in a sermon on some general topic. It was necessary to illustrate a point, and I did it by picturing a father ransoming his son from captivity among the Algerines, and glorying in his love of liberty and his fight against bondage. They all thought I was going to apply it to slavery, but I did not. I applied it to my subject, and it passed off; and they all drew a long breath.

It was not long before I had another illustration from that quarter. And so, before I had been there a year, I had gone over all the sore spots of slavery, in illustrating the subjects of Christian experience and doctrine. It broke the ice.

You may say that that was not the most honourable way, and that it was a weakness. It may have been so; but I conquered them by that very weakness.

If you find that it is necessary to do a thing, make up your mind to do it. If you can not accomplish it in the very best way, do it by the next best, and so on; but see to it that it is *done* by the best means at your command. Go to the bottom of it, and work at it until you attain the desired result.

Thus, in using an illustration pointed at a certain fault or



weakness among your people, as I have done a thousand times (and I speak within bounds), never let it be known that you are aiming at any particular individual. Sometimes a person will say to me: "There is great distress in such a family, and they will be in your church, can't you say something that will be useful to them?" If I were to bring that case right before the congregation, in all its personal details, it would scandalize the church, and repel the very people whom I wanted to help. But suppose, while I am preaching, I imagine a case of difference between husband and wife, who are, perhaps, hard, suspicious, and unforgiving toward each other, and I take the subject of God's forgiveness, and illustrate it by the conduct of two couples, one of which stands on a high and noble plane, and the other on a low, selfish plane. They do not suppose that I know anything about their difficulty, because, when I am hitting a man with an illustration, I never look at him. But such a man or woman will go home, and say: "Why, if somebody had been telling him of my case, he could not have hit it more exactly." They take it to heart, and it is blessed unto them. I have seen multitudes of such cases.

You may go down to the brook under the willows and angle for the trout that everybody has been trying to catch, but in vain. You go splashing and tearing along, throwing in your pole, line and all. Do you think you can catch him that way? No, indeed; you must begin afar off and quietly; if need be, drawing yourself along on the grass, and perhaps even on your belly, until you come where through the quivering leaves you see the flash of sun, and then slowly and gently you throw your line around, so that the fly on its end falls as light as a gossamer upon the placid surface of the brook. The trout will think: "That is not a bait to catch me; there is nobody there," and he rises to the fly, takes it, and you take him.

So there are thousands of persons in the world that you will take if they do not know that you are after them, but whom you could not touch if they suspected your purpose. Illustrations are invaluable for this kind of work, and there is nothing half so effective.

I notice that in a prayer meeting which has grown up under a minister who illustrates, all the members of the church illustrate

too. They all begin to see visions, and to catch likenesses and resemblances. This becomes a habit, and it is to them a pathfinder or a starfinder, as it were. It leads men to look at truth, not only in one aspect, but in all its bearings, and to make analogies and illustrations for themselves, and thus brings them into the truth. By this means you bring up your congregation to understand the truth more easily than you would by any other method.

But to continue illustrations for any considerable time you must draw them from various sources. To do this you must study the natural world, the different phases of human society, and the life of the household, in moral colours. There are inexhaustible sources from which to draw the needful instruction.

If you are preaching to pedants, you may properly enough illustrate by the ancient classics; but if you are preaching to common people you must not confine yourself to that course, although it is allowable, once in a while, to use some illustration drawn from the heroes of ancient history and mythology. But what may be called scholarly illustrations are not generally good for the common people. They may serve to impress the more ignorant with a sense of your knowledge, but that is not what you are called to preach for. That would be a poor business.

In the development of this faculty of illustration it is necessary to know the philosophy of it. All illustrations, to be apt, should touch your people where their level is. I do not know that this art can be learned; but I may suggest that it is a good thing, in looking over an audience, to cultivate the habit of seeing illustrations *in them*. If I see a seaman sitting among my audience, I do not say, "I will use him as a figure," and apply it personally; but out of him jumps an illustration from the sea, and it comes to seek me out. If there be a watchmaker present, that I happen to recognize, my next illustration will very likely be from horology; though he will be utterly unconscious of the use I have made of him. Then I see a school mistress, and my next illustration will be out of school teaching. Thus, where your audience is known to you, the illustration ought not simply to meet your wants as a speaker, but it should meet the wants of your congregation, it should be a help to them.

You must not be afraid to illustrate truths in an undignified

manner. Young gentlemen, where you cannot help yourselves, you have a right to be dignified; but this cant and talk about dignity is the most shabby and miserable pretense of pride and of an artificial culture. There is nothing so dignified as a man *in earnest*. It is that which approves itself to the moral consciousness of every hearer. If, besides that, you are naturally graceful and handsome, and your thoughts flow in a certain high order, so much the better; but if they do not, and you assume the pretense of it, and put on the mask of these things without having the inward soul, you are base.

Now, in respect to truth, do not be ashamed to explain it by homely illustrations. Do not be ashamed to talk to the miller about his mill, or to the plowman about his plow, and about the grubs that are under it, and about every part of it. If you are going to be a master in your business, you must know about all these things yourself. Having eyes, you must see; having ears, you must hear; and having a heart, you must understand. A minister ought to be the best informed man on the face of the earth. He ought to see everything, inquire about everything, and be interested in everything. You may ask, "Shall I treasure up illustrations?" Yes; if that is your way, you may do so; if not, you will very soon find it out. You must know what is the best method for yourself. You can not pattern on anybody else. Imitations are always poor stuff. You must find out the thing meant for you, and then do the best you can. You must be faithful in the place where God put you, and for which you are equipped. A minister is not a man of books alone. He must know books, and study them profoundly. You must be conversant with the thoughts and deeds of the noble minds of every age of the world. There is much for you in history and in libraries, in the discourse of your equals, in the conversation of scholarly men. But this fact you ought not to overlook nor to neglect, that you are God's shepherds, for the sheep and for the lambs as well. You ought to know about the woman's spinning wheel, about the weaver's loom and every part of it. You ought to know about the gardener's thoughts, his ambitions and feelings. You ought to know what is done in the barn, in the cellar, in the vineyard, and everywhere. You ought to know and understand a naturalist's enthusiasm when he finds a new flower or a new bug—



that ecstasy is almost like a heaven of heavens to the apocalyptic John! You must study men, women, and children, their weaknesses and their strong sides. You must live among men, and be sentient and conscious of what they are, and what they think about. And when you come to preach, it is for you to draw an illustration in the range where your hearers live, whether it be high or low; and you must change them continually, providing now for some, and now for others. But they must always be on a level with your audience, so that they will surge back and draw your hearers to you.

You must bring people to yourself, and not wait for them to come. As well might a new bucket of white oak, newly hooped—the very best bucket to be had—expect that water shall come up from the well to its level, while it simply hangs over the well-curb; it must go down to the water and bring it up. You must go down to your people. There must be a place where your yarn is joined onto their yarn, and it must be joined in one common thread.

Let me say to you that, in using illustrations, you must be sure to make them always apposite. If you should undertake to “work ship” in an audience where there is a good old sea captain, and you should make a mistake, and speak as though you thought the taffrail was the rudder, he would feel contempt for you. If I should hear a politician say that Job said, “Every tub must stand upon its own bottom,” I should laugh at him, and his illustration and quotation would not do me much good. When you are talking about matters that men know about, you must know just as much as they do. Never let a man in your congregation detect you in an inaccuracy, if you can help it. If you speak about making wine, be sure you know about making it. (To do that, it is not necessary that you should know how to drink it, however!)

There are two points about learning. In the first place, never ask a question, if you can help it; and secondly, never let a thing go unknown for the lack of asking a question, if you can not help it. Think it out first. Dig it out, study it, go around it, question yourself, and get it out. If you really can not, then turn and ask somebody. See everything, and see it right, and use it as you go along.

A man's study should be everywhere—in the house, in the street, in the fields, and in the busy haunts of men. You see a bevy of children in the window, and you can form them into a picture in your mind. You may see the nurse, and the way she is dressed. You try to describe it. You look again, and make yourself master of the details. By and by it will come up to you again itself, and you will be able to make an accurate picture of it, having made your observation accurate. Little by little, this habit will grow, until by and by, in later life, you will find that you command respect by your illustrations just as much as by arguments and analogies.

Then again, while elaborate allegories and fables are very good things, and may be used with discretion, illustrations, so called, ought always to be clean, accurate, and *quick*. Do not let them dawdle on your hands. There is nothing that tires an audience so much as when they have to think faster than you do. You have got to keep ahead of them. Do you know what it is to walk behind slow people and tread on their heels? How it tires and vexes one! You know how people are vexed with a preacher who is slow and dilatory, and does not get along. He tires people out, for though he may have only six or seven words of his sentence completed, they know the whole of it; and what is the use, then, of his uttering the rest?

With illustrations, there should be energy and vigour in their delivery. Let them come with a crack, as when a driver would stir up his team. The horse does not know anything about it until the crack of the whip comes. So with an illustration. Make it sharp. Throw it out. Let it come better and better, and the best at the last, and then be done with it.

In regard to the gift of illustrating, and the education of it, it is the same as with all other things. Some men are born mathematicians; and whatever they do, that will be the strongest impulse in their intellectual natures. Other men are a little less endowed in that direction, and others still less; but almost everybody has enough of the arithmetical faculty on which to build an education. It is so also in poetry and in music. You are educable.

In regard to illustration, you will find persons who are instinctively given to it. Many of you will find it natural to you.

But do not be discouraged, even when it is natural, if you do not at once succeed. Why should you succeed before you learn the rudiments of your art? Why should you be able to run before you can walk? Practise by yourselves to imaginary audiences; make illustrations and use them; train yourselves to it. If once or twice on every Sabbath day you can make a fitting illustration and see that you have gained ground by it, take courage, and you will improve day by day and year by year.

I can say, for your encouragement, that while illustrations are as natural to me as breathing, I use fifty now to one in the early years of my ministry. For the first six or eight years, perhaps, they were comparatively few and far apart. But I developed a tendency that was latent in me, and educated myself in that respect; and that, too, by study and practice, by hard thought, and by a great many trials, both with the pen, and extemporaneously by myself, when I was walking here and there. Whatever I have gained in that direction is largely the result of education. You need not, therefore, be discouraged if it does not come to you immediately. You can not be men at once in these things. This world is God's anvil, and whatever is fit for the battle has been beaten out on that anvil, and it has felt the fire before it has felt the blow. So that whatever you would get in this world that is worth having, you must work for. Do not be cast down. Be brave, industrious, disinterested, simple, and true-hearted. Whatever God means to give you for your usefulness will certainly come to you.

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*Do you think the use of these encyclopædias of illustrations is honest?*

Why not?

*Because one ought to make his illustrations himself, I should say.*

That is purely a question with yourself. If a man says he would rather take the pains and time to work out his illustrations himself, he has a perfect right to do so. It is just the same question that comes up in everything else. "Do you think a man ought to copy pictures, or to study from nature?" One school will tell you one thing, and another school another thing. It is



simply a matter of preference. I should not borrow my illustrations a great while if I could help it; but if you find that you accomplish your designs in preaching, and at the same time improve yourself by practising in that way, it is allowable.

*Is it best to give your illustrations extemporaneously, even when the sermon is written?*

Yes, and no. Sometimes it is, and sometimes it is not. Some of your carefully written out illustrations would die between your attempting to remember and attempting to originate. There is nothing worse than to get into the place where those two processes meet. You will hear a person say: "I have either to read my sermons or else make brief notes and not read at all." The difficulty is that if you have your notes well written out and then look up from them and undertake to extemporize, you will be extemporizing, as it were, with one eye, and thinking of what is in your notes with the other; so that you will really rest on neither, but go down between the two processes. No man can extemporize until he cuts the cord that holds him to his sermon. You can not extemporize while you are thinking of anything other than the impulse which is carrying you on.

*Would you advocate special services for children, at times?*

Yes. It is a very excellent plan indeed. I think every parish should have a periodical service for children. Dr. Storrs has had a regular series of discourses for his children, and it has been one of the most excellent features of his ministry in Brooklyn.

*About how much poetry is necessary to spice a sermon?*

Of quotations I should say, generally none. Of poetical treatment and illustrations, it "depends." Poetry, you know, is not a thing that you can measure and put in by quantity. If your theme suggests illustrations which are poetical, take and use them; but to determine that you will have a definite quantity of them will kill inspiration in the very egg.

*Is there not danger of getting into a loose way of sermonizing, by not preparing your illustrations beforehand, but just taking them as they strike you in the pulpit?*

Yes; and there is danger of getting into too severe a habit, if you prepare in the other way. There is danger any way. You can not prepare in any other way so that you can say to yourself, "Now I am sure of success; I need not give myself any further

responsibility." For, if there is a working man on earth, it is the man who undertakes to preach continually and steadily to an ordinary congregation. Let me say to you, gentlemen, never be frightened because you have preached a bad sermon; but, at the same time, never, under any circumstances whatever, preach a bad sermon on purpose, or by negligence or carelessness. If you are not in a good condition for work, if you are sick, never apologize, but do the best you can, even though knowing you are doing it very poorly. That is not a pleasant experience, as I can bear witness. Preach the best you can, under the circumstances, without apology. If you are preaching to but six people, do the best thing you can do. Do it always and everywhere.

*Is it a proper thing to make an audience laugh by an illustration?*

Never turn aside from a laugh any more than you would from a cry. Go ahead on your Master's business, and do it well. And remember this, that every faculty in you was placed there by the dear Lord God for His service. Never *try* to raise a laugh for a laugh's sake, or to make men merry as a piece of sensationalism, when you are preaching on solemn things. That is allowable at a picnic, but not in a pulpit where you are preaching to men in regard to God and their own destiny. But if mirth comes up naturally, do not stifle it; strike that chord, and particularly if you want to make an audience cry. If I can make them laugh, I do not thank anybody for the next move; I will make them cry. Did you ever see a woman carrying a pan of milk quite full, and it slops over on one side, that it did not immediately slop over on the other also?

*If a man "slops over" on some occasions, is he not liable to "slop over" continually?*

Not long in one place, if he does it continually. If you take the liberty, however, from what I have said, to quote stale jokes; if you make queer turns because they will make people laugh, you will prove yourselves contemptible fellows. But if, when you are arguing any question, the thing comes upon you so that you see a point in a ludicrous light, you can sometimes flash it at your audience, and accomplish at a stroke what you were seeking to do by a long train of argument, and that is entirely allowable. In such a case do not attempt to suppress laughter. It is a part

of the nature that God gave us, and which we can use in His service. When you are fighting the Devil, shoot him with anything.

*Would not a man, under such circumstances, be in danger of overturning just what he was trying to accomplish?*

No; unless he accompanies it very poorly.

If a minister is earnest and honest, and a man of God, if he bears about him the savour of the heavenly world and the benevolence of this life, his people will know it. If you know the difference between a man who is in earnest and one who is merely playing, do you suppose the people will respond to the superficial and lower qualities, and not to the greater and nobler ones in a true preacher?

*How long would you advise a young man to preach?*

As long as he can make his people take his sermon. That is very much like asking how long a coat you should have made for people, in general.



## XXII

### HEALTH, AS RELATED TO PREACHING

**A**S to the direct bearing of this bodily condition on your coming duties, let me say, first, men in a high state of health invariably see more sharply the truth that they are after. They see its relations and its fitness. They have a sense of direction, combination, and of the power of relations of truth to emotion. The old-fashioned way of preparing a sermon was where a man sat down with his pipe, and smoked and "thought," as he called it, and after one or two or three hours—his wife saying to everybody in the meantime, "Dear man, he is upstairs studying; he has to study so hard!"—in which he has been in a muggy, fumbling state of mind, he at last comes out with the product of it for the pulpit. It is like unleavened bread, doughy, dumpy, and heavy, hard to eat, and harder to digest. There has been nothing put in it to vitalize it. But when a man is in a perfect state of health, no matter where he goes, he is sensitive to social influence and to social wants. He discovers men's necessities instinctively. He is very quick to choose the instrument by which to minister to those necessities, so that when he goes to his study he has something to do, *and he knows what it is.*

He is accurate in his thinking. Is there no difference in the varying moods of the draughtsman? Take him with a bilious headache. Do you suppose he can make his strokes so that every line of his drawing shall express thought? Some people say, "Why, there are times when I can do more in a day than in a week at other times," which is true, because at those periods the system is in a perfect condition of health. Suppose you could have that condition always, what workers you would be! How it would sharpen your comprehension of the various relations of truth, and with what ease could you see and handle them! For all these things are largely dependent upon health. You can not drudge them out.

Men are said to have genius. What is genius but a condition of fibre, and a condition of health in fibre? It is nothing in the world but automatic thinking. And what is automatic thinking? It is thought that *thinks itself*, instead of being run up or worried up to think. Whoever thinks without thinking is in fact a genius. In music, it is said that it "makes itself." In arithmetic or mechanics, the demonstration "comes" to you. You do not think it out, except automatically. Real thinking out to automatic action, and almost unconscious. Under such circumstances, your intuitions and your sudden automatic thinking, nine times out of ten, will be true; and when you send slow footed Logic afterwards to measure the footsteps and the way over which your thoughts have travelled, Logic will come back and report: "Well, I did not believe it, but he was right, after all." So, then, for sharpness and accuracy and complexity of thinking, in which much of your life ought to lie, you require the best conditions of health in the system by which you think.

The next step is where you come to speak what you have thought. You know how beautifully some men write, and how poorly they deliver; how well they prepare their materials, and yet their materials when prepared are of no force whatever. They are beautiful arrows—arrows of silver; golden tipped are they, and winged with the feathers of the very bird of paradise. But there is no bow to draw the arrows to the head and shoot them strongly home, and so they all fall out of the sheath down in front of the pulpit or platform. People say, "Those sermons are fit to be printed"—and they are fit for nothing else. They are essays. They are sections of books. But what the preacher wants is the power of having something that is worth saying, and then the power of saying it. He is to hold the light up so that a blind man can not help feeling that it is falling on his orbs. He needs to put the truth in such ways that if a man were asleep it would wake him up; and if he were dead, it would give him resurrection for the hour.

A man that breaks his backbone every time he explodes a vowel—how can he do it?

Who are the speakers that move the crowd—men after the pattern of Whitefield, what are they? They are almost always men of very large physical development, men of very strong

digestive powers, and whose lungs have great aerating capacity. They are men of great vitality and recuperative force. They are men who, while they have a sufficient thought power to create all the material needed, have pre-eminently the explosive power by which they can thrust their materials out at men. They are catapults, and men go down before them. Of course you will find men now and then, thin and shrill voiced, who are popular speakers. Sometimes men are organized with a compact nervous temperament and are slender framed, while they have a certain concentrated earnestness, and in narrow line they move with great intensity. John Randolph was such a man.

I desire to call your attention to this force-giving power, that which lends impetuosity, that which gives what I might call *lunge* to man's preaching.

Why should you waste your time every Sunday morning and night, without being conscious of having done anything? You can afford to do it occasionally, as there is wastage in all systems; but a man who goes on preaching when there is no evidence of accomplishment is like a windmill that the boys put on the top of a house; it goes around and around, but it grinds nothing below. Preaching is *business*, young gentlemen. It means the hardest kind of work.

There is nothing else in this world that requires so many resources, so much thought, so much sagacity, so much constant application, so much freshness, such intensity of conception within, and such power of execution without, as genuine preaching. Ministers sometimes think they do their duty by resting chiefly on their faithful pastoral labours, but they do not half bring out the preaching power, when they rely on the indirect and social influences that are connected with it. One should help the other. You are to bring out the preaching element, if it is in you; for, in this age, preaching is almost everything. This is pre-eminently the talking age. A preacher must be a good talker, and must have something in him that is worth talking about. People say: "Show me a man of deeds, and not of words." You might as well say: "Show me a field of corn; I don't care about clouds and rain." Talking makes thought and feeling, and thought and feeling make action. Show me a man of words who knows how to incite noble deeds!



But, once more, it is impossible for a man who is an invalid to sustain a cheerful and hopeful ministry among his people. An invalid looks with a sad eye upon human life. He may be sympathetic, but it is almost always with the shadows that are in the world. He will give out moaning and drowsy hymns. He will make prayers that are almost all piteous. It may not be a minister's fault if he be afflicted and ill, and administers his duties in mourning and sadness, but it is a vast misfortune for his people.

If there is anything in this world that is the product of wholesome, healthy souls, it is the hope giving and joyful comforter. If there was ever a system of joy and hope in the world, prefigured by the prophets, and afterwards characterized by the Sun of Righteousness, it is that ardent and hope inspiring gospel that you are to preach. You are not sent out to tell of the dungeon and the pit, the shackle and the yoke—except as redeemed by the power of Jesus Christ into rest and peace. And the very product of the gospel which you are to carry to mankind is hope and cheer. It is good news.

You find men struggling with cares. They stand where a dozen ways meet, in utter perplexity, and they want the best advice you can give. Your Sunday ought to bring this witness from your flock every single month of your ministry: "If it had not been for the refreshment that I got on Sundays, I never could have carried my burdens." The sweetest praises that ministers can ever have are from the house of trouble, from men in bankruptcy, from men hunted by perverse fortune almost to the bounds of suicide. They come to you, and say: "Sir, it was the cheer and comfort of your preaching that helped me through, or I never could have endured it." That will be better than any guerdon and any compliment. We are sent to men that are cheerless, men in distress, men who are burdened; and we have no business to have any other ministry than that which is based on the sweet teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must learn ardour and fervour from St. Paul's interpretation of them. We must tell of love, hope, courage, and the cheering prospect of a blessed immortality. What business have you to turn all this into a minor symphony? But you can not do otherwise, unless you keep yourselves healthy, cheerful, hopeful, and buoyant.

You must call in to your assistance all the help you can derive from the highest conditions of bodily health.

Then there is a relation of this question in another direction. I think the minister of a parish, who has been there for five years, ought to impress upon the young people of his parish the practical idea, that to be a Christian is to be the happiest person in the world. Men say: "Let us have our enjoyment here, and have a good time; then, when we have had it, and tasted what there is to be tasted, we had better be pious." That is about the idea of it. It is a gloomy and dismal thing; but, to a certain extent, we are to blame for this false notion.

Now it seems to me that we ought to make known what is unquestionably the truth, namely, that Christianity aims only at a nobler style of manhood, and at a better and happier style of living. Christianity means friendship carried up into a sphere where by the natural man you could never elevate it. It means the purest enjoyments of earth as well as heaven. It means that life shall blossom like Aaron's rod. And every man who is a true Christian is one who has lived up to the measure of his competency, in a bright and joyful life, compared with which all other lives are low and ignoble. The Apostle Paul, after going through a long line of exhortations to virtue, finally wound up by saying, "Whatsoever is lovely and of good report, think on these things."

A true minister, in order to inspire his congregation with this noble conception of a Christian character and a Christian life, must have something in him. He can not drudge and complain. He can not go around with lead in his shoes, nor yet in his head. A man of God ought to strike men among whom he moves as being more manly than anybody else; certainly, never less. You should bear in mind that you are twice ordained—once, when your mother laid her hand in love upon your just born head, after giving you your organization and nature; and, again, by the Holy Ghost, later in life, to give you a fuller development. If you are not a man, what business have you in the ministry? You have mistaken your vocation. You may do to make some things, but you will not be a maker of men. It takes a *man* to refashion men. You can not do it unless you have some sort of vigour, vitality, versatility, moral impulse, and social power in

you. And if you have these things, how they will win! How men will want to come to you! They tell me that the pulpit is losing its power, that religion is going under, and that science is to rule. I will put genuine manly religion against all the science in the world.

I have seen a great deal of life, and on all of its sides. I have seen the depths of poverty, and I have seen competency. I have seen the extremity of solitariness, and the crowds of a city, both at home and abroad. I have seen what art has done, and whatever is to be seen in the wilderness. I have had youth and middle age, and now I am an old man. I have seen it all, and I bear witness that, while there are single moments of joy in other matters that, perhaps, carry a man up to the summit of feeling, yet for steadfast and repetitious experience there is no pleasure in this world comparable to that which a man has, who habitually stands before an audience with an errand of truth, which he feels in every corner of his soul and in every fibre of his body, and to whom the Lord has given liberty of utterance, so that he is pouring out the whole manhood in him upon his congregation. Nothing in the world is comparable to that. It goes echoing on in you after you get through. Once in a while I preach sermons that leave me in such a delightful state of mind that I do not get over it for two days; and I wonder that I am not a better man. I feel it all day Sunday and Monday, and there is not an organ in the world that makes music so grand to me as I feel in such supreme hours and moments. But I am conscious how largely the physical element of healthfulness enters into this experience. When I am depressed in body and heavy in mind I do not get it. You can not expect either these exceptional, higher consummations, or the strong, steady flow of a joyful relish for your work, unless you cultivate a robust and healthful manhood.

I will now suggest to you some practical directions, which are very largely the result of my personal experience, and which may be profitable to you. You must excuse any egotism I may exhibit. As I understand it, these lectures are nothing but a branch of the regular chair of Pastoral Theology, and I am to explain here in its practical form that which, in its philosophical form, Professor Hoppin gives you in his instructions at other times.



Experience is always egotism, and that is what I am here to give you.

To begin with, I will say that I had this advantage, that my father was a dyspeptic. From my earliest childhood I noticed the great watchfulness and skill with which he took care of himself, and now and then he dropped words of advice. When I went into the ministry, I remembered some of his maxims and some of his incidental utterances. They led me to think about caring for my own health; I did not know much about it, but I thought about it. I "watched" it as the engineers say on the road. A good engineer watches both the engine and the road. And now, as the result of between thirty and forty years of incessant preaching, I give you these hints in regard to the care of your health.

When I first began, I had an impression that if I had good bone and muscle I should be all right. I very soon learned that it was possible for a man to take too much exercise, and that a man could be built up physically at the expense of the brain. You are sufficiently acquainted with aquatic and other sports to know that you may overtrain a man, so that he is carried beyond his highest power. Now, if you undertake, as scholars, very violent exercise, according to the exaggerated idea of muscular Christianity, you will very soon use up all the vitality of your system in the bone and muscle development, and it will leave you, not better, but less fitted for intellectual exertion. Yet there must be enough care given to bone and muscle to furnish a good platform, on which your artillery is to stand.

Next comes the stomach. In regard to that, everybody feels that he must not be a glutton nor a gormand, but there is very little discrimination and very little observation as to the quantity and quality and the times and seasons of eating. Preachers may be divided into two great classes: the sanguineous class, who can not eat much if they are going to think or speak; and the class who have the extreme nervous temperament, who can not speak or work unless they do eat. On Sunday morning, when I wake, my first thought is that it is Sunday morning, and the very idea of it takes away my appetite. I go down, drink a cup of coffee, and eat an egg and half a slice of toast. That is all I can eat. There is just enough to sustain my system. Then I

preach, and, if I have not done very well, I am hungry; but if I have done very well, I can not eat much dinner. That is because there is a reaction of the nervous influence of the system. The whole system is working so much by the brain and the nerves that the stomach does not crave anything. Just as great grief, or fear, or any other extreme passion, takes away appetite, so does active preaching. Ordinarily, I take but a moderate dinner on Sunday. Supper with me is at five o'clock in the afternoon, and I usually take a cup of tea and a small piece of cracker. That is all I can take. Then I go to my evening work, and when I get through, I sometimes am satisfied to take nothing but an orange, which I eat to give my stomach something to do until morning, and to keep it from craving—for often a fit of craving will give one a nightmare as quickly as overfeeding will. At other times I feel a strong appetite, and then I eat. Perhaps once out of five Sundays I eat more just after preaching, morning or evening, than I do all the rest of the day put together. The system indicates it, and therefore I am not harmed by it. It does not disturb my sleep, and digestion goes on perfectly.

Now the point I take is, not that you shall follow this, but that you shall find out, accurately, in regard to your own eating, what obstructs and what does not obstruct your mental operations. If you go to your study after a hearty breakfast, and you find it takes you from eight o'clock to eleven before you really get into your work, you may be pretty sure that you have overloaded your stomach, and that the energies of your system have been so busy in the work of digestion that you could not call them off to do brain work. But if you get up from the table after a comparatively light meal, which requires but little digestion, and when you go into your study find that you can apply yourself at once to your labour, it is because you have eaten in due proportion to the needs of your system. Eating is to the work of the human body just what the firing of an engine is to travelling. Eating is a means to an end. It is not a habit nor a social custom merely. It is not a question of luxury. Do men eat stupidly, and simply because they are hungry? You eat to make working force; and as the engineer keeps his eye all the time on the steam-gauge to know the number of pounds of pressure, and to regulate it to the various conditions of going

up or down grade or on a level, and to the number of passengers he is carrying, so does a man eat, or so ought he to eat, all the time gauging himself. You have, in fact, to eat much or little, according to the work you have to do. When you come back from a journey, you must be careful not to overwork yourself, and not to eat too much. If you are in a regular harness and are working, you ought to know what you shall eat. Your business is to eat so that you can think and work, and not for self-indulgence only.

The same holds good in respect to sleep. Many men, going into the ministry, have broken down from want of sleep. I will say a few things on that point. In the first place, sleep, that was reckoned involuntary, like many other involuntary things, can to a certain extent be brought under the dominion of habit and the will. There is no doubt but that the human will is the strongest power in this world, next to death. A man who says, "By the grace of God I WILL," and who feels it in his bones, in his muscles, and in his whole being, can do almost anything. Now it may seem a little singular, but it is true, that if you are possessed of a very nervous organization you will need less sleep than if you are of a phlegmatic temperament. If a man is dull, lethargic, and slow, eight or nine hours of sleep is necessary for him. But if he is nervous, lithe, thin, quick, vividly sensitive, so that he is all the time letting out sparks somewhere, he will require but from five to seven hours' sleep. That seems strange, but it is just as simple as anything can be. Sleep is an active operation, during which the process of assimilation goes on. Now, the nervous man eats quickly, works quickly, and sleeps quickly. He does just as much work while he is sleeping six hours as the lethargic man does in seven or eight. A man who is slow and plethoric, who takes a breath before every word, and who never has a quick motion, can never sleep quickly. He will be an hour in doing up as much work in his sleep as another man will do in forty minutes. The temperament acts throughout. Never gauge the duration of your sleep by the time anyone else sleeps. Some men will tell you that John Wesley had only so much sleep, Hunter, the great physiologist, so much, and Napoleon so much sleep. When the Lord made you, as a general thing, He did not make Napoleons.



Every man carries within himself a Mount Sinai, a revealed law, written for himself separately. You must administer sleep to yourselves according to your temperament, your constitution, and your wants. Something you may know presumptively, but principally you must learn by experience.

Sometimes, when men get into hard work, they are apt to sleep too little. Let me say to you here, that of all the dire mistakes among young gentlemen, night study is the greatest. There may be some of you that can carry that out well. Some men are so tough that nothing will seem to affect them detrimentally. But I think that more than eighty per cent of ministers who indulge in night study abbreviate their lives, weaken their tone, and take away from themselves the fulness of their power. It is bad to do it.

It is especially bad for a preacher to prepare his sermons on Saturday night. It is bad for a man to keep his brain at the top of its power from early on Saturday to late at night, so that he sleeps in a fiery dream of sermon. For then, he preaches on Sunday; and there are two days in which the brain is unintermittingly impleted and stimulated. It is hot and feverish. Then, worse than all, comes what is called "black Monday," a day upon which the minister throws off everything, and thus completely unstrings the bow.

You must give yourselves intervals of rest and playtime. But never let an excitement have such a rest that you run clear down. The way to cure an excitement is to meet it with another one. If you have preached all the week, and are keyed up very high, and you say to yourself, "Now I must rest," and you rest a day, but still the nervous excitement continues; and Sunday you call again upon your brain, which gives the response, you will, perhaps, be carried over Monday; but by Tuesday you begin to come down, and you think the earth is not so bright as it formerly seemed. You begin to think that you have mistaken your vocation, and that you will turn farmer. Then you have gone down as far as you ought. Some begin to see the blue devils at that point. You must meet fire with fire. A new excitement, *brought in from another quarter*, however, and of a different nature, will meet the old one, and on the ashes of the past you will build up a new flame.

I have sometimes had a whole month of undertone, because I let go and ran clear down, not knowing then how to meet one excitement with another, and thus carry myself along healthily.

For the Sabbath day, it seems to me that while it is important that you should train for thought and matter, it is only second in importance that you should train also for *condition*. Now, no man who studies during the last part of the week so that he comes to Sunday with only the refuse of what he has in him, making it his weakest day, can come up to the requirements of his duty. He is kept in a continual state of excitement, passing from one strain to another without interval. No man is wise who does it. Saturday should be a play day. I make it a day, not of laziness, but of genial, social, pleasurable exhilaration. I go up street and meet pleasant people. I go and look at pictures. I have a great many sources of enjoyment that many of you could not enjoy. I love to see horses. I like to go on the street and see the different teams go by. I like to stand on the ferryboat and see the splendid horses come on with their great loads. I like a Dexter. I like all fine horses, but I like the dray horses, too. There is such a sense of might and power with them. They are almost as interesting as a locomotive engine—the finest thing man ever created, unless it be a watch. I like to go to Tiffany's. I ask: "What are your men doing today?" "Well," says Tiffany, "we will go down and see." We go down to the *ateliers*, watch the workmen silver plating and engraving, and talk with them. It is a good thing for you to live close to common people, plain folks and workingmen. It keeps you near to humanity as distinguished from artificiality and conventionalism. After I get home I enjoy myself quietly in the evening, and when Sunday comes I am impleted. I have fresh blood; and without *training* for condition, I have it. I feel like a race horse. Sometimes I can not wait for the time to come for me to go into the pulpit. I long to speak. But this result can not be attained by studying yourselves up, and coming into church on Sunday quite dry and desiccated.

People have often asked me how I managed to sleep after preaching. Generally, I do not have any difficulty in getting to sleep. I can always sleep after a good sermon, and even after a bad one I do not keep awake long! You must remember that

the reason why a man can not sleep after excitement is because his brain is gorged with blood. The blood is the stimulus which works the brain, and the brain draws to itself all the blood it can get. I always know whether my brain has been doing its work well or not. If I find my hands and feet warm, I say generally that the product of my thought is not worth much; and I begin to think there has been a waste of brain material. But if my hands and feet grow chilly, and I have to wrap up all over, on account of the blood, which is the working force, being drawn away from the extremities to the brain, I know that the thinking power has been busy—has probably worked to some effect. You must deal with yourselves on this theory; whatever will distribute the blood to every part of your system will relieve the brain, and you will be able to go to sleep. In the first place, do not talk after preaching on Sunday nights. Do not go home and have a good time over what you have seen and heard. Many a minister uses himself up more by the after-piece than he does by the main performance. It is sweet to talk when you are in such fine condition! Everybody is there pouring out compliments upon you. But they are wasting you. You are like the cocoon of a silkworm, which they are unwinding, and in so doing they take the life out of you. You never get through your work. I owe what I know of horticulture to the study I gave it at short intervals, when I was preaching every day for two years, and twice on Sunday, besides doing revival and other work. I got out of the State Library of Indiana four or five volumes of Loudon's works on agriculture and horticulture. I read them. There was a charm in reading even the names of the plants in the catalogues, although there was nothing very stimulating in it. It was like Webster's Dictionary, where the connection is broken at every word, and yet it is intensely interesting to read. In that way I let myself down quietly, and then I could go to sleep.

But suppose I can not go to sleep? I get up from bed, and walk about the room without dressing myself. That is, I take an air bath, and, if need be, I throw up the window, and keep on walking, not until I am chilled, but until I am pretty nearly chilled. The moment that any part of the body is attacked, the vital forces rush to that part to repair any loss that may have



taken place. If you take cold, the vital forces instantly attempt to establish the equilibrium. Bring cold to bear upon your body, and the vital forces instantly send out the blood to the part where the cold is, to restore the warmth, and that relieves the system. The blood ceases to be dammed up in the brain and in the large vessels.

But suppose I can not sleep then; what is to be done? I say to myself: "Now, you have *got* to go to sleep; and the sooner you give up, the better it will be." So I walk into the bathroom and turn on a little water, just enough to put on my feet and ankles; and it is very rare indeed that the obstinacy of my system resists that. This operation brings the blood down to the feet, and I can almost always get to sleep. If I can not, I turn on a little more water and sit down in it.

All this is treating one's self physiologically, medically, so to speak, without medicine. It is treating one's self according to correct principles for the sake of procuring sleep. If you do not sleep, first or last, your audience will; and therefore it is necessary that you should sleep for them, that they may keep awake to hear what you may have to say. More than that, when a man has gone through the paroxysm of the week, which is Sunday, it is necessary that he should, as soon as possible, be put into a state to go to work again.

Therefore you should eat as you would fire an engine; and sleep, remembering that out of sleep comes the whole force of wakefulness, with the power you have in it.

There are many other points that I had in mind, but I have already taken so much of your time that I will not detain you longer, but will merely await your questions.

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*Will you say a word as to the number of hours a man should spend in his study? How many hours a day, at the maximum?*

There is no absolute rule that can be given in all cases. I should think, however, that at the maximum, a man can do as much in four hours' work during the day as he needs to do. But it must be *work*. You can sometimes collect materials for your work, although you do not feel like working. You can ascertain the negative, if you can not create the positive. Some-

times a man will study a whole day to find out that he can not do a thing that he was counting on. But I do not think that any man can originate matter, and pursue a course of severe fruitful study, for more than four hours a day. I do not believe that he can average that. I think that ministers often attempt to study too much. If they would concentrate their power, and use it regularly, they would get out much more than by spreading it over so much ground.

*Should one do much in the way of preparing a sermon on Monday?*

No; unless he is going to preach on Monday night. Saturday and Monday ought to be inclined planes, the former a very inclined plane up to Sunday, and the latter an inclined plane away from it. There are a great many things that a man can do on Monday, which are necessary to be done, but he should not gorge his brain on that day.

*Ought a man to prepare his sermons on Sunday morning, and make a practice of it?*

If the Lord showed him that that was the best way of doing it, he should. I do not know whether you mean to be personal or not, but that is my habit.

When I went to Lawrenceburg, I went thinking that I would do the best I could. I had the vague general instructions that are given, to "lay deep foundations, to study thoroughly, and to bring," as old Dr. Humphrey used to say, "nothing but the beaten oil into the sanctuary." I felt that this was connected with regular and incessant study during all the week. I tried to study so. I succeeded in studying, but I could not succeed in using what I had. On Sunday I could not do anything with what I had so laboriously dug out during the week. Of course, I increased my general stock of knowledge. Sometimes I would find that after working a subject up all the week, something else would take possession of me on Saturday, and I would have to preach it on Sunday to get rid of it. I felt ashamed and mortified and began to fear I was on the way to superficiality. I made many promises, that, if God would help me, I would make my sermons a long time beforehand. I kept on making promises and breaking them, and the older I grew the worse I grew; and finally, in spite of prayers and resolutions, I had to give it up

and prepare my sermons mostly on Sunday morning and Sunday afternoon. But then you must recollect that this was accompanied by another habit—that of regular study and continual observation. I do not believe that I ever met a man on the street that I did not get from him some element for a sermon. I never see anything in nature which does not work toward that for which I give the strength of my life. The material for my sermons is all the time following me and swarming up around me. I am tracing out analogies, which I afterwards take pains to verify, to see whether my views of certain truths were correct. I follow them out in my study, and see how such things are taught by others.

These things I do not always at the time formulate for use, but it is a process of accumulation. Now, by the peculiar temperament given to me, I am able, out of this material, when Sunday comes and I know what I want to do with my congregation, to bring up some instrument to do it with, some view of truth that will include in it a great many of the results reached long before by the practice I have been describing, and which are crystallized ready for use. In that way I make my sermons. Another man begins his on Tuesday, and he would be untrue to himself if he followed any other plan. Every man must find out the way he is to work. I would advise no young man to follow my method. It happens to be my way, but it is very likely not to be yours. You can find out, by trying, which is the best way for you to work.



## XXIII

### SERMON MAKING

THE pulpit, as it has come down to us, has had an extraordinary history. For one reason and another it has, in many periods of time, been almost the exclusive source of knowledge among the common people. Before books were either plenty or cheap; before the era of the newspaper, the magazine or the tract; before knowledge was poured in, as now, from a hundred quarters—an era almost flooded with it, the people imbibing it, so to speak, through the very pores of their skins—the pulpit was the school, the legislative hall, the court of law; in short, the university of the common people. By change of circumstances, many elements of success in one age cease to be operative in another. Preaching will be proper or improper, wise or successful, in proportion as it adapts itself to the special want of the different peoples and the different classes of people in any one time. It may be said, in general, that the length and breadth of topics will be in inverse ratio to the civilization and refinement of the people; that is to say, the pulpit in a rude neighbourhood, where the knowledge of the people will mainly be derived from it, must cover a broader ground, and must instruct the people in a hundred different things which in civilized and refined communities they learn from other sources. As refinement increases, however, the tax laid upon a minister's resources augments immeasurably. In order to maintain authority and influence, he must not be behind his own auditory. If knowledge is increasing among his people, every year will require him to develop new resources. I do not think there is any profession that demands so much of a man as that of the Christian ministry. Besides, the double oration on Sunday, the prayer meeting, the conference meeting, and various other forms of neighbourhood meetings, are drawing incessantly upon him. He is the root and trunk through which a thousand leaves are drawing sap.

The lawyer has the facts of his case made up and brought to

him. He is aroused by direct antagonisms. He is striving for an end which may be gained or lost in the compass of a few hours or a few days. Everything is real, visible, near, and stimulating to him. But the Christian minister, from week to week, and through years, if his ministry be long in the same place, must discourse on themes high, recondite, and infinite in variety, and find his incitement either in the general affection which he has for his people, or in the special fascination of the truths which he preaches. His mind derives stimulation wholly from internal sources, and he gets but little help from externals. In the silence of his study, or in his solitary walks, he devises his own plans; and although his sermons are aimed at certain external conditions, at particular classes of men, or special wants, yet in the course of years it becomes difficult, week after week, to educate the same people in the same general direction, without repetition of one's self, without growing formal, or falling into dull didactics. When I consider the steady pull which the pulpit makes upon the Christian minister, I marvel not that sermons are so poor, but that they are so good; and I think that neither the pulpit nor the ministry have anything to fear from a just comparison of their results with those of any other learned profession in society.

This necessity of preparing every week fresh matter becomes, to unfruitful minds, an excessive taxation, and drives men to all manner of devices; and, even at the best, it is no small burden for a man to carry through the year his pack of sermons, born or unborn. While men are stimulated in the seminary to the higher conceptions of the duty of preaching, while newspapers are criticising, and hungry and fastidious audiences grow more and more exacting in their demands, few there are who consider or sympathize kindly with the necessities that are laid upon young men and upon old men, to bring forth an amount of fresh and instructive matter, such as is produced in no other profession under the sun. We do not desire to have preaching made less thorough or less instructive, but it is desirable that it should be less burdensome. Many and many a minister is a prisoner all the week to his two sermons. Into them he has poured his whole life, and when they are done there is little of him left for pastoral labours and social life. Few men there are

who are upborne and carried forward by their sermons. Few men ascend, as the prophet did, in a chariot of fire. The majority of preachers are consciously harnessed, and draw heavily and long at the sermon, which tugs behind them. In every way, then, it is desirable that preaching should be made more easy, that men should learn to take advantage of their own temperament, and that they should learn the best plans and methods.

And first let me speak of written and unwritten discourses. No man can speak well, the substance of whose sermons has not been prepared beforehand. Men talk of "extemporaneous preaching," but the only part that can properly be extemporaneous is the external form. Sometimes, indeed, one may be called to preach offhand—*ex tempore*—and may do it with great success; but all such sermons will really be the results of previous study. The matter must be the outgrowth of research, of experience, and of thought. Most preachers have intuitional moments—are, so to speak, at times inspired; but such moments are not usual, and no true inspiration is based upon ignorance.

It is not, therefore, a question whether men shall depend upon the inspiration of the moment for their matter, since all who ever speak well must, in some way, have prepared for it; but whether, *having something to teach*, they shall reduce their instruction to writing, or give it forth unwritten.

Many considerations have been urged for and against written and unwritten kinds, and both have their disadvantages; so that a true system would seem to require sometimes one mode, and sometimes the other. My own experience teaches me that my sermons should sometimes be written, but more often unwritten.

A written sermon will be more likely to be orderly. It can contain a greater variety of material than one will be apt to carry in his memory, or to introduce with skill in an extemporaneous discourse. It may abound with finer lines of thought, employ a more skillful analysis, and deal with more subtle elements. It may be made more compact, move in straighter lines, and with cleaner execution. But, on the other hand, it is liable to be uttered with stale fervour. It is likely to be devoid of freshness, to lack naturalness, by the substitution of purely literary forms, and to be deficient in flow and power. This will be especially true of the sermons of mercurial, versatile men,



whose feelings and thoughts, endlessly changing, can not long fit themselves to the mould of the sermon in which they have been expressed, so that, whatever may have been the inspiration of the composing hour, the delivery will be artificial. Cautious natures—men who think slowly and express themselves with a sort of fastidious conscientiousness—will find the written form of sermon adapted to their nature. The responsibility of preaching is very much alleviated, in tender and sensitive minds, by the consciousness that the sermon is all prepared and that little or nothing is left to the contingencies of the hour of speaking.

On the other hand, men of fruitfulness in thought, of ardour in feeling, courageous men, who are helped by a sense of difficulty and danger, will be roused by the necessity of exertion, and find their best powers of eloquence developed by their face-to-face dealing with an audience.

If a minister tarries long in the same place, and would carry his people over a broad field of instruction, it would be almost impossible but that he should either write his important sermons, or prepare careful briefs, which will demand scarcely less labour. Yet unwritten sermons are undoubtedly better adapted to the ten thousand varying wants of the community than are written ones. There are certain states of mind of transcendent importance in preaching, which never come to a preacher except when he stands at the focal point of his audience and feels their concentrated sympathy. No man who is tied up to written lines can, in any emergency, throw the whole power of his manhood upon an audience. There is a freedom, a swiftness, a versatility, and a spiritual rush which comes to no man but him whose thoughts are free from trammels, and who, like the eagle, far above thicket and forest, and in the full sunlight, has the whole wide air in which to make his flight.

The essential necessity is, that every preacher should be able to *speak*, whether with or without notes. Christ "*spake*." Peter, on the day of Pentecost, did not put on his spees and read; nor did any other Apostle when called on to preach. One's message to his hearers should be so delivered as to bring his personality to bear upon them; he should be in free communion with his audience, and receive from them as well as give to them. There are a thousand shades of thought reflected from the

faces of people. There are a thousand slight modifications of statement which one will make as he proceeds, after seeing and feeling the effect of what he has already said. There are points of application which can not be imagined until he stands before his people.

A sermon should be carefully arranged, and the material thoroughly digested. But, as in a great battle elaborately planned a hundred contingencies will change the detail of its execution, or even the whole plan of it, so, in a sermon, a man should be prepared for all the emergencies which may occur. For, in every sermon, the preacher should propose to himself definite ends to be gained. A sermon is not like a Chinese firecracker, to be fired off for the noise which it makes. It is the hunter's gun, and at every discharge he should look to see his game fall. The power is wasted if nothing be hit. There are a thousand situations where a written sermon would be impossible. There are multitudes in every congregation to whom the more elaborate style of the written sermon is uncongenial. A written sermon is apt to reach out to people like a gloved hand. An unwritten sermon reaches out the warm and glowing palm, bared to the touch.

At funerals, at conference meetings, and in neighbourhood gatherings, where there are a thousand incidental points to which a minister is called upon to speak, nothing will answer but unwritten discourse. Who could go into a rude neighbourhood of turbulent spirits and hope to gain and hold their attention by reading from a manuscript? Who can preach the gospel to the unlettered and the stupid, when the point of the pen has been substituted for the living fire? A physician would be ashamed to sit at the bedside of his patient, carrying his library of books with him. His knowledge must be such, and his use of it so facile, that he can, out of the stores of his own mind, readily adapt himself to every varying phase of want. The preacher is a physician of the soul. With thousandfold reason should he be able, with adaptable skill, to vary to every form of disposition the resources of Divine truth.

Besides, the difference between the ease and fruitfulness of a minister trained to preach without writing, and of one who is bound to his notes, is incalculable. The task of writing two

sermons a week leaves a conscientious man time and strength for but little else; whereas a man trained to think on his feet, to gather materials while he walks and talks with men, will be likely to have a far greater liberty.

In considering the relative merits of written and unwritten sermons, we ought not to make ourselves partisans, and select all the good points of some system and put them over against all the weak points of the other. It should be admitted that some men of a given temperament will do better by writing, although better yet might have been done by the unwritten sermon if they had, or had trained in themselves, the ability to execute it. Written sermons undoubtedly tend to repress the power of many native speakers. Most men can be trained to think upon their feet, but by disuse many lose the power God has given them. And for such, or for those who in any way miss the right education, the written sermon will be the best. The temptation to slovenliness in workmanship, to careless and inaccurate statements, to repetition, to violation of good taste, in unwritten sermons, are only arguments for more conscientious preparation beforehand. No man can preach well, except out of an abundance of well wrought material. Some sermons seem to start up suddenly, soul and body, but in fact they are the product of years of experience. Sermons may flash upon men who are called in great emergencies to utter testimony, and the word may grow in their hand, and, their hearts kindling, their imagination taking fire, the product may be something that shall create wonder and amazement among all that hear. It is only the form, like the occasion, that is extemporaneous. No man preaches except out of the stores that have been gathered in him. As it is possible for a written sermon to be utterly unstudied, unscholarly, repetitious, and inane; so, on the other hand, it is possible for an unwritten sermon to be ripe, condensed, methodical, logical, swift moving from premise to conclusion, and entirely consonant with good taste. But such sermons never proceed from raw, unthinking men; they are never born of ignorance. And let me say here, that, while nothing is more admirable than what may be called intuitions, nothing more effective than sudden outbursts of impassioned oratory, these can never be expected from mere nature. Though a man be born to genius, a natural orator



and a natural reasoner, these endowments give him but the outlines of himself. The filling up demands incessant, painstaking, steady work.

Natural genius is but the soil, which, let alone, runs to weeds. If it is to bear fruit and harvests worth the reaping, no matter how good the soil is, it must be ploughed and tilled with incessant care. All must work. To some it is laborious and dull like an ox's tread; to others it is life, like the winged passage of the bird through the air; but each, in his way, must labour. The life of a successful minister may be cheerful, yea, buoyant. His work may seem the highest exercise of liberty. It may be impassioned, facile, and fruitful, remunerating him as it goes on; nevertheless, there must be incessant work. That is not alone work which brings sweat to the brow. Work may be light, unburdensome, as full of song as the merry brook that turns the miller's wheel; but no wheel is ever turned without the rush and the weight of the stream upon it.

It is not, then, a question between prepared and unprepared sermons. It is a question, simply, whether it is best to prepare your sermons by writing, or so to prepare them that they are held in solution in your own mind. Which is the better of these will depend largely upon your own position in society, upon the special work it is appointed you to perform, upon your own temperaments and attainments. But, considered ideally, he who preaches unwritten sermons is the true preacher; however much you may write, the tendency of all such mechanical preparation should be toward the ideal of the unwritten sermon; and throughout your early training and your after labour, you should reach out after that higher and broader form of preaching.

Now for the next important point. Much of the effectiveness of a discourse, as well as the ease and pleasure of delivering it, depends upon the plan. Let me earnestly caution you against the sterile, conventional, regulation plans, that are laid down in the books, and are frequently taught in the seminaries. There is no one proper plan. You are not like a bullet mould made to run bullets of the one unvarying shape. It is quietly assumed by the teachers of formal sermonizing that a sermon is to be unfolded from the interior, or from the nature of the truth with which it deals. That this is one element, and often the chief

element, that determines the form of the sermon, is true; but it also is true, that the object to be gained by preaching a sermon at all will have as much influence in giving it proper plan as will the nature of the truth handled—perhaps even more. Nay, if but one or the other could be adopted, that habit of working which shapes one's sermons from the necessities of the minds to which it is addressed is the more natural, the safer, and the more effective.

Consider how various are the methods by which men receive truths. Most men are feeble in logical power. So far from being benefited by an exact concatenated development of truth, they are in general utterly unable to follow it. At the second or third step they lose the clew. The greatest number of men, particularly uncultivated people, receive their truth by facts placed in juxtaposition rather than in philosophical sequence. Thus, a line of fact or a series of parables will be better adapted to most audiences than a regular unfolding of a train of thought from the germinal point to the fruitful end. The more select portion of an intelligent congregation, on the other hand, sympathize with truth delivered in its highest philosophic forms. There is a distinct pleasure to them in the evolution of an argument. They rejoice to see a structure built up, tier upon tier, and story upon story. They glow with delight as the long chain is welded, link by link. And if the preacher himself be of this mind, and if he receive the commendations of the most thoughtful and cultured of his people, it is quite natural that he should fall wholly under the influence of this style of sermonizing; so he will feed one mouth, and starve a hundred. In this way it is, and especially in large cities, that congregations are sifted by a certain process of elective affinity. Those will come to the church who like the style of the sermon, and those will drop out who have no sympathy with it; and thus we have churches of emotion, churches of taste, and churches of philosophical theology; whereas each pulpit should give somewhat of everything.

The emotions of some men are roused through the inspiration of the intellect mainly; but there are others whose intellect, although it may be the channel through which the incitement flows, is not itself roused to its fullest activity until the feelings come to inspire it. We hear much of preaching to the understand-

ing and of preaching to the feelings, and it is discussed which is the better way; but in some men you can not reach the understanding until you have reached the feelings, and in others you can not reach the feelings until you have taken possession of the understanding. A minute study of the habits of men's minds will teach the preacher how to plan his sermon so as to gain entrance.

As it is, sermons are too often cast in one mould. Week after week, month after month, year after year, when the text is announced, every child in the congregation almost, as well as the minister himself, can tell that it will be divided into "First," "Second," and "Third," together with, "Then certain practical observations." But what would be thought of one who should seek to enter every house upon a street or in a city with a single key, fitted to but one kind of lock? The minister is the "strong man," armed in a better sense than that of the parable, and it is his business to enter every house, to bind the man of sin, and to despoil him. But every door must be entered by a key that fits that door. The minister is a universal, spiritual burglar. He enters, not to despoil good, but evil. He enters, not to take possession, but to dispossess evil. He enters, not to deprive men of their valuable effects, but to restore them that which their Father left for their inheritance, and which has been withheld from them by the Adversary. He must seek entrance, in every case, where God has put the door. In some men there is a broad and double open door, standing in the front and inviting entrance. The familiar path in other cases is seen to wind around to the side door. There be those industrious drudges who never live out of their kitchens, and if one would find them in ordinary hours, he must e'en go around to the back door. If one lives in the cellar, he must be sought through the cellar.

It is this necessity of adaptation to the innumerable phases of human nature that reacts upon the sermon, and determines the form which it shall take. If it were possible, never have two plans alike.

It may be well, today, to preach an intellectual theme by an analytic process; but that is a reason why, on the following Sunday, an intellectual theme should be treated by a synthetic process. If you have preached the truth by the ways of statement and proof, you have then a reason for following it with a



sermon that assumes the truth, and appeals directly to the moral consciousness. A didactic sermon is all the stronger if it follows in strong contrast with a sermon to the feelings. If you have preached today to the heart through imagination, tomorrow you are to preach to the heart through the reason; and so the sermon, like the flowers of the field, is to take on innumerable forms of blossoming. When you have finished your sermon, not a man of your congregation should be unable to tell you, distinctly, what you have done; but when you begin a sermon, no man in the congregation ought to be able to tell you what you are going to do. All these cast-iron frames, these stereotyped plans of sermons, are the devices of the Devil, and of those most mischievous devils of the pulpit, formality and stupidity.

It is a good thing to select your text and unfold precisely its meaning and its context, and then to deduce from it certain natural lines of thought. But this is only one way. A descriptive sermon, an argumentative sermon, a poetical sermon, and a sermon of sentiment have, severally, their own genius of form. I need not tell you that variety is, in the best sense of that term, the "natural" method. In nature, a few elements, by various permutations and combinations, produce infinite varieties, endless contrasts, and constant changes. Nature is always fresh, and never stales upon the taste.

Besides all this, every preacher will find that something is to be allowed for the way in which his own mind works. A man naturally inclined to mysticism has his whole temperament arrayed against the anatomical method of sermonizing. The man of a dry intellectual nature, who sees all things cold, clear, and colourless, can not imitate the man whose mind lives under an arch of perpetual rainbows. So then, because the plans of sermons must be affected both by the nature of the truth itself, by the nature of the man himself, and, above all, by the ends sought in the sermon is addressed, you will perceive the absurdity of attempting any one method of laying out a sermon, and the wisdom of seeking endless diversity of method as well as of subject.

A respectable source of failure is conscientious thoroughness. It is true that it is the office of the preacher to furnish thought for his hearers, but it is no less his duty to excite thought. Thus

we give thought to breed thought. If, then, a preacher elaborates his theme until it is utterly exhausted, leaving nothing to the imagination and intellect of his hearers, he fails to produce that lively activity in their minds which is one of the best effects of right preaching; they are merely recipients. But under a true preaching, the pulpit and the audience should be carrying on the subject together, one in outline, and the other with subtle and rapid activity, filling it up by the imagination, suggestion, and emotion. Don't make your sermons too good. That sermon, then, has been overwrought and overdone which leaves nothing for the mind of the hearer to do. A sermon in outline is often far more effective than a sermon fully thought out and delivered as a completed thing. Painters often catch the likeness of their subject when they have sketched in the picture only, and paint it out when they are finishing it; and many and many a sermon, if it had been but sketched upon the minds of men, would have conveyed a much better idea of the truth than is produced by its elaborate painting and filling up. This is the secret of what is called "suggestive preaching," and it is also the secret of those sermons which are called "good, but heavy." There are no more thorough sermons in the English language, and none more hard to read, than those of Barrow, who was called an unfair preacher, because he left nothing for those to say that came after him. You must be careful not to surfeit people; leave room for their imagination and spirit to work. Don't treat them as sacks to be filled from a funnel. Aim to make them spiritually active—self-helpful.

Without unfolding and commenting upon the ordinary modes of sermonizing, I pass on to say that a much larger use should be made of expository preaching than has been customary in our churches. It is an admirable way of familiarizing the people with the very text of Scripture. There is an authority, which every audience recognizes, in the word of God as delivered in the Sacred Scripture, which does not belong to ordinary human teaching. Above all, the Bible is the best example in literature of the admirable mingling of fact, illustration, appeal, argument, poetry, and emotion, not in their artificial forms, but conformably to nature. The Bible is sometimes spoken of as a "revelation" in contradistinction to nature; but this is done by those who

degrade nature, and regard it as something low and imperfect. I regard the Bible as the noblest book of nature that has ever existed in life. Its very power is in that it is an exposition of nature, wider and deeper than any that philosophy has attained to; that is one reason why the Bible is found, as philosophy progressively ascertains the truths of nature, to conform to them with singular adaptation; and that is a reason, too, why the Bible becomes more and more powerful as it is better interpreted and its innermost meaning is made clear by the discoveries of men in the great field of natural science. The Bible is like a field in which is hidden gold. Men who have ploughed over and over the surface and raised perishable crops therefrom have failed to find and secure that very precious ore which is its chief value.

It will surprise one to see what wealth and diversity of topics will come up for illustration in discussion, by means of expository preaching. A thousand subtle suggestions and a thousand minute points of human experience, not large enough for the elaborate discussion of a sermon, and yet like the little screws in a watch, indispensable to the right action of the machinery of life, can be touched and turned to advantage in expository preaching. There are many topics which, from the excitement of the times and from the prejudice of the people, it would be difficult to discuss topically in the pulpit, yet, taken in the order in which they are found in Sacred Writ, they can be handled with profit, and without danger. The Bible touches all sides of human life and experience, and scriptural exposition gives endless opportunities of hitting folks who need hitting. The squire can hardly stamp out of church for a "Thus saith the Lord."

While exegetical and expository preaching have elements in them which attract and satisfy the scholar and the thinker, they, at the same time, by a strange harmony in diversity, have just that disconnectedness and variety of topic in juxtaposition which seem best suited to the wants of uncultivated minds. I know an eminent pastor in Ohio, who, probably, never in his life preached any other sermon than an expository one. The Bible in his hands, Sunday after Sunday, was his only sermon. During a long pastorate, he went through the Book from beginning to end, and often, and the fruit of his ministry justified his method. It was proverbial that no people were more thoroughly furnished



with knowledge, with habits of discrimination in thought, or were more rich in spiritual feeling.

There is one temptation of which I have spoken to you before, but I must be allowed to give you a special and earnest caution on the subject of "great" sermons. The themes you will handle are often of transcendent greatness. There will be times continually recurring, in which you will feel earnestly the need of great power; but the ambition of constructing great sermons is guilty and foolish in no ordinary degree. I do not believe that any man ever made a great sermon who set out to do that thing. Sermons that are truly great come of themselves. They spring from sources deeper than vanity or ambition. When the hand of the Lord is laid upon the heart, and its energies are aroused under a Divine inspiration, there may be given forth mighty thoughts in burning words, and from the formative power of this inward truth the outward form may be generated, perfect, as is the language of a poem. Perhaps I should have said *show* sermons, rather than *great* sermons—sermons adapted to create surprise, admiration, and praise, sermons as full of curiosities as a peddler's pack, which the proud owners are accustomed to take in all their exchanges and travellings as their especial delight and reliance. Often they are baptized with fanciful names. There is the "Dew upon the Grass" sermon, and the "Trumpet" sermon, and the sermon of the "Fleece," and the "Dove and Eagle" sermon, and so on. Such discourses are relied upon to give men their reputation. To construct such sermons, men oftentimes labour night and day, and gather into them all the scraps, ingenuities, and glittering illustrations of a lifetime. They are the pride and the joy of the preacher's heart; but they bear the same relation to a truly great sermon as a kaleidoscope, full of glittering bits of glass, bears to the telescope, which unveils the glory of the stellar universe. These are the Nebuchadnezzar sermons, over which the vain preacher stands, saying: "Is not this great Babylon that I have builded for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" Would to God that these preachers, like Nebuchadnezzar, might go to grass for a time, if, like him, they would return sane and humble!

A sermon is a weapon of war. Not the tracery enamelled upon

its blade, not the jewelry that is set within its hilt, not the name that is stamped upon it, but its power in the day of battle, must be the test of its merits. No matter how unbalanced, how irregular and rude, that is a great sermon which has power to do great things with the hearts of men. No matter how methodical, philosophic, exquisite in illustration, or faultless in style, that is a poor and weak sermon that has no power to deliver men from evil and to exalt them in goodness.

Style is only the outside form which thoughts take on when embodied in language. Style, then, must always conform to the nature of the man who employs it; as the saying goes: "Style is the man." In general, it may be said, that is the best style which is the least obtrusive, which lets through the truth most nearly in its absolute purity. The truths of religion, in a simple and transparent style, shine as the sunlight on the fields and mountains, revealing all things in their proper forms and natural colours; but an artificial and gorgeous style, like a cathedral window, may let in some light, yet in blotches of purple and blue that spot the audience, and produce grotesqueness and unnatural effects.

It is desirable that the preacher should have a copious vocabulary, and a facility in the selection and use of words; and to this end he should read much, giving close attention to the words and phrases used by the best authors, not for servile copying and memorizing, but that these elements may become assimilated with his own mind, as a part of it, ready for use when the need comes.

He should also have an ear for strong and terse, but rhythmical sentences, which flow without jolt and jar. Above all other men, the preacher should avoid what may be called a literary style, as distinguished from a natural one; and by a "literary style," technically so called, I understand one in which abound these two elements—the artificial structure of sentences, and the use of words and phrases peculiar to literature alone, and not to common life. Involved sentences, crooked, circuitous, and parenthetical, no matter how musically they may be balanced, are prejudicial to a facile understanding of the truth. Never be grandiloquent when you want to drive home a searching truth. Don't whip with a switch that has the leaves on, if you want to tingle. A

good fireman will send the water through as short and straight hose as he can. No man in his senses would desire to have the stream flow through coil after coil, winding about. It loses force by length and complexity. Many a sermon has its sentences curled over it like locks of hair upon a beauty's head. I have known men whose style was magnificent when they were once thoroughly mad. Temper straightened out all the curls, and made their sentences straight as a lance. It is a foolish and unwise ambition to introduce periphrastic or purely literary terms where they can possibly be avoided. Go right ahead. Don't run round for your meaning. Long sentences may be good, but not *twisting ones*. Many otherwise good sermons are useless because they don't get on. They go round, and round, and round, and always keep coming back to the same place.

There is a charm in some styles, an unwearying freshness and sweetness, which men find it difficult to account for. I think upon analysis, it may be found that such styles are based upon vernacular words and home-bred idioms. At Pentecost every man heard in his own tongue wherein he was born. Use homely words—those which people are used to, and which suggest many things to them. The words that we heard in our childhood store up in themselves sweetness and flavour that make them precious all our life long afterwards. Words borrowed from foreign languages, and words that belong especially to science and learning and literature, have very little suggestion in them to the common people. But home-bred words, when they strike the imagination, awaken ineffable and tremulous memories, obscure, subtle, and yet more powerful. Words register up in themselves the sum of man's life and experience.

The words which, from the cradle to the grave, have been the vehicles of love, trust, praise, hope, joy, anger, and hate, are not simply words, but, like paper, are what they are by virtue of the thing written on them. He who uses mainly the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, giving preference to the idioms and phrases which are homely, will have a power which can not be derived from any other use of human language. Such language is an echo in the experience of men; and as a phrase in a mountainous country, when roundly uttered, goes on repeating itself from peak to peak, running in alternate reverberations through the



whole valley, so a truth runs through all the ranges of memory in the mind of the hearer, not the less real because so extremely rapid and subtle as to defy analysis. The words themselves, full of secret suggestions and echoes, multiply the meaning in the minds of men, and make it even more in the recipient than it was in the speaker. Words are to the thought what musical notes are to the melodies. As an instance of contrasted style, let one read the immortal allegory of John Bunyan in contrast with the grandiose essays of Dr. Johnson. Bunyan is today like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in season; his leaf shall not wither. Johnson, with all his glory, lies like an Egyptian king, buried and forgotten in the pyramid of his fame.

There are a few cautions which may be worth considering. Avoid a professional manner. There is no reason why a clergyman should be anything but an earnest Christian gentleman. I shall not quarrel with the preacher who employs a symbolic dress for some special religious reason, but no man should dress himself simply for the purpose of saying, "I am a preacher." The highest character in which a preacher can stand is that of simple Christian manhood. It is not the things in which he differs from his fellow men by which he will gain power. It is by the things in which he will be in sympathy with them. There is a great significance in that sentence, "It behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God." It is not a man's business, then, to separate himself, by dress or by manner, from the common people. It is his humanity, and his sympathy with their humanity, it is his sameness with them, both in weaknesses and in sins, in aspirations and partial attainment, that give him his power. The power of a preacher is the power of a brother among his brethren. It always seems to me, therefore, that the putting on of a professional dress is the hiding of one's power. Walk into your pulpit as you would enter an ordinary room. Don't go there thinking of yourself, your coat, your hair, your step. Don't go there as a "man of God." Never be a puppet. I abhor the formal, stately, and solemn entrance of a man whose whole appearance seems to call upon all to see how holy he is, and how intensely he is a minister of the gospel. Nor can I

avoid a feeling of displeasure akin to that which Christ felt when He condemned prayers at the street corners, when I see a man bow down himself in the pulpit to say his prayers, on first entering.

Many men sacrifice the best part of themselves for what is called the dignity of the pulpit. They are afraid to speak of common things. They are afraid to introduce home matters; things of which men think and speak, and in which, every day, a part of their lives consist, are thought not to be of enough dignity for the pulpit. And so the interests of men are sacrificed to an idol. For when the pulpit is of more importance than the joys and the sorrows, the hopes and the fears, the minute temptations and frets of daily life, it has become an idol, and, to feed its dignity, bread is taken from the mouths of the children and of the common people. There are few things that have power to make men good or bad, happy or unhappy, that it is not the duty of the pulpit to handle. This superstition of dignity has gone far to make the pulpit a mere skeleton. Men hear plenty from the pulpit about everything except the stubborn facts of their everyday life, and the real relation of these immediate things to the vast themes of the future. There is much about the divine life, but very little about human life. There is much about the future victory, but very little about the present battles. There is a great deal about divine government, but there is very little about the human governments under which men are living, and the duties which arise under those governments for every Christian man. There is a great deal about immortality and about the immortal souls, but very little about these mortal bodies, that go so far to influence the destiny of the immortal souls.

A sermon, like a probe, must follow the wound into all its intricate passages. Nothing is too minute for the surgeon or for the physician; nothing should be too common or too familiar for the preacher.

Beware of an exclusive association with your kind. It is a good thing for ministers to meet together to cheer and instruct each other, but there is danger that they will fall into such exclusive professional sympathy that they will see everything from a ministerial standpoint. It would be of great value to

ministers if they saw all the themes that they discuss with the eyes of common men—of the wicked and the abandoned, of the weak and the strong, of the learned and the unlearned, of working-men, of meditative women, and of little children. On every theme which the preacher handles is turned the thought of ten thousand men in the community around him. It were worth his while to reap their harvest-field as well as his own. But chiefly, this universal sympathy with humanity is valuable because it produces a larger sympathy and a more generous manhood, and reinvigorates those elements in the preacher which ally him to his kind, and from which he is to derive one great element of success.

One word as to the length of sermons. That never should be determined by the clock, but upon broader considerations—short sermons for small subjects, and long sermons for large subjects. It does not require that sermons should be of any uniform length. Let one be short, and the next long, and the next intermediate. It is true that it is bad policy to fatigue men, but shortness is not the only remedy for that. The true way to shorten a sermon is to make it more interesting. The object of preaching is not to let men out of church at a given time. The length and quality of a sermon must be determined by the objects which it has in view. Now you can not discuss great themes in a short compass, nor can you by dribblets—by sermons of ten or twenty minutes—train an audience to a broad consideration of high themes. There is a medium. A minister ought to be able to hold an audience for an hour in the discussion of great themes; and the habit of ample time and ample discussion, even if occasionally it carries with it the incidental evil of weariness, will, in the long run, produce a nobler class of minds and a higher type of education than can possibly belong to the school of dwarfed sermonizers.

Do not undervalue the capacity of the common people. Children, even, will follow discussions with interest which seem to be far above their heads. Before I was ten years old, I remember that discussions on the subject of foreordination, freewill, and decrees, held me with a perfect fascination. The Bible was made for common people, and the themes that are in it are comprehensible by common people; and those sermons which can not be understood with profit by the common people of your



congregation will probably be of little profit to anybody, not even to yourself.

While there is a principle of adaptation to be observed and applied, it should be remembered that the great bulk of a minister's work does not consist in the unfolding of abstruse problems or mysteries, but the themes which he mainly handles are those which appeal to the great moral instincts and to that fundamental common sense belonging to all men. You need not fear to carry an elaborate argument down to the common people. You need not fear to address a sermon of emotion and homely application to the most cultivated audience. Let a man preach in the city as he would in the country. Let a man preach in the country as he would in the city. Preach before a cultivated audience as you would before an audience of farmers, and preach before a congregation of farmers as you would before a congregation of students. It is true that, as I have already explained, you must vary your discourses from week to week for purposes of adaptation; but the great subject matter is common to all men.

The most effective sermonizing, then, and that which is to be aimed at in general, is the unwritten, rather than the written; the plans must be of constant variety as adapted to the truth preached, the end to be gained, the audience to be affected, and the temperament of the preacher; the sermon should be rather suggestive than exhaustive in treatment, exposition of the Bible holding a large place in your scheme, and show-sermons utterly avoided; simplicity of style, both in language and manner, is the shortest road to success; and the earlier the preacher learns by association and sympathy with his people to interest them in him and his work, and to give them always the best that he can do, the sooner will he get upon them the hold by which he shall draw them toward God and the Higher Life.

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*What would you suggest as to the proportion of written and unwritten sermons to be preached through one's ministry?*

No general rule can be given. About one third written to two thirds unwritten. But be sure that you know *how to preach*.

*What do you think of the benefit of using books of sermon-plans?*

They will help you when you know how to use them; that is, when you don't need them. Before that time don't smother yourself with them.

*What do you think of the propriety or advisableness of what is called sensational preaching?*

I am for it, or against it, according to what you mean by it. If it aims at a low, temporary success by mere trickery, I don't believe in it; but if you mean preaching which produces a *sensation*, I do. The legitimate use of real truth is all right, no matter how much people get stirred up; the more the better. In this matter you will not err if you are *up to par in manliness*, neither above it nor below.

## XXIV

### LECTURE ON ORATORY

**T**HIS lecture on oratory was given by Henry Ward Beecher before the National School of Elocution and Oratory, Philadelphia, in 1876. He was introduced by General John F. Eaton, United States Commissioner of Education, who said: "It is most fitting, in connection with the proposed oratorical contest, that the first orator of the country, Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, should address this large and refined audience. I take pleasure in introducing this distinguished gentleman, who will now address you." This lecture has had a wide influence, as I have pointed out in Chapter V. It contains more remarks on the delivery of the speech than any other single utterance of Beecher. It contains his definition of oratory: "I define oratory as influencing conduct with truth sent home by all the resources of the living man."

I congratulate myself, always, for the privilege of appearing before a Philadelphia audience—intelligent, sympathetic, appreciative; but never more than now, when the audience is assembled both to behold, and to bear witness to, one of the noblest institutions that could be established in your midst; one of the most needed; and one which I have reason to believe has been established under the inspiration of the highest motives, not only of patriotism in education, but of religion itself. This city—eminent in many respects for its institutions, and its various collections which make civilization so honourable—I congratulate, that now, at last, it has established a school of oratory in this central position, equidistant from the South, from the West, and from the North, as a fitting centre from which should go out influences that shall exalt, if not regenerate, public sentiment on the subject of oratory; for, while progress has been made, and is making, in the training of men for public speaking, I think I may say that, relative to the exertions that are put forth in other depart-



ments of education, this subject is behind almost all others. Training in this department is the great want of our day; for we are living in a land whose genius, whose history, whose institutions, whose people, eminently demand oratory. There is nothing that draws men more quickly to any centre than the hope of hearing important subjects wisely discussed with full fervour of manhood; and that is oratory—truth bearing upon conduct, and character sent home by the living force of the full man. And nowhere, in the field, in the forum, in the pulpit, or in schools, is there found to be a living voice that informs of beauty, traces rugged truth, and gives force and energy to its utterance, that people do not crowd and throng there.

We have demonstrations enough, fortunately, to show that truth alone is not sufficient; for truth is the arrow, but man is the bow that sends it home. There be many men who are the light of the pulpit, whose thought is profound, whose learning is universal, but whose offices are unspeakably dull. They do make known the truth; but without fervour, without grace, without beauty, without inspiration; and discourse upon discourse would fitly be called the *funeral of important subjects!*

Nowhere else is there to be so large a disclosure of what is possible from man acting upon men, as in oratory. In ancient times, and in other lands, circumstances more or less propitious develop the force of eloquence in special instances, or among particular classes. But consider the nature of our own institutions. Consider that nothing can live in our midst until it has accepted its mission of service to the whole people.

Now and then, men, mistaking good sense, speak contemptuously of popularizing learning, and of popularizing science; but popular intelligence is that atmosphere in which all high scientific truth and research, and all learning, in its amplest extent, are, by advance in civilization, to find their nourishment and stimulation; and throughout our land the people demand to know what are the principles of government, what is the procedure of courts, what is the best thought in regard to national policy, what are the ripening thoughts respecting the reformations of the times, what is social truth, what is civil truth, and what is divine truth. These things are discussed in the cabin, in the field, in the courthouse, in the legislative hall, everywhere, throughout forty or

fifty millions of people. This is in accordance with the nature of our institutions and our customs; and to the living voice more largely than to any other source are we indebted for the popularization of learning and knowledge, and for motive force, which the printed page can scarcely give in any adequate measure.

Yet, though this is in accordance with the necessity of our times, our institutions and our customs, I think that oratory, with the exception of here and there an instance which is supposed to be natural, is looked upon, if not with contempt, at least with discredit, as a thing artificial; as a mere science of ornamentation; as a method fit for actors who are not supposed to express their own sentiments, but unfit for a living man who has earnestness and sincerity and purpose.

Still, on the other hand, I hold that oratory has this test and mark of divine providence, in that God, when He makes things perfect, signifies that He is done by throwing over them the robe of beauty; for beauty is the divine thought of excellence. All things, growing in their earlier stages, are rude. All of them are in vigorous strength, it may be; but not until the blossom comes, and the fruit hangs pendant, has the vine evinced for what it was made. God is a God of beauty; and beauty everywhere the final process. When things have come to that, they have touched their limit.

Now, a living force that brings to itself all the resources of imagination, all the inspirations of feeling, all that is influential in body, in voice, in eye, in gesture, in posture, in the whole animated man, is in strict analogy with the divine thought and the divine arrangement; and there is no misconstruction more utterly untrue and fatal than this: that oratory is an artificial thing, which deals with baubles and trifles, for the sake of making bubbles of pleasure for transient effect on mercurial audiences. So far from that, it is the consecration of the whole man to the noblest purposes to which one can address himself—to the education and inspiration of his fellow men by all that there is in learning, by all that there is in thought, by all that there is in feeling, by all that there is in all of them, sent home through the channels of taste and of beauty. And so regarded, oratory should take its place among the highest departments of education. I have said that it is disregarded largely; so it is; and

one of the fruits of this disregard is that men fill all the places of power—how? With force misdirected; with energy not half so fruitful as it might be; with sincerity that knows not how to spread its wings and fly. I think that if you were to trace and to analyze the methods which prevail in all the departments of society, you would find in no other such contempt of culture, and in no other such punishment of contempt.

May I speak of my own profession, from a lifelong acquaintance—from now forty years of public life and knowledge and observation? Why I say, without being supposed to arrogate anything to my own profession, that I know of no nobler body of men, of more various accomplishments, of more honesty, of more self-sacrifice, and of more sincerity, than the clergymen of America? And yet, with exceptional cases, here and there, I can not say that the profession represents eminence: I mean eminence, not in eloquence, but in oratory. I bear them witness that they mean well; I bear them witness that in multitudes of cases they are grotesque; that in multitudes of other cases they are awkward; and that in multitudes still greater they are dull. They are living witnesses to show how much can be done by men that are in earnest with offices, and without the adjuvants of imagination and of taste, by training; and they are living witnesses also, I think, of how much is left undone to make truth palatable, and to make men eager to hear it and eager to receive it, by the lack of that very training which they have despised—or neglected, at any rate.

Or, shall I ask you to scrutinize the manner and the methods that prevail in our courts—the everlasting monotone and seesaw? Shall I ask you to look at the intensity that raises itself to the highest pitch in the beginning, and that then, running in a screaming monotone, wearies, if it does not affright, all that hear it?

Or, shall I ask you to consider the wild way in which speaking takes place in our political conflicts throughout the country—the bellowing of one, the shouting of another, the grotesqueness of a third, and the want of any given method, or any emotion, in almost all of them.

How much squandering there is of the voice! How little is there of the advantage that may come from conversational tones! How seldom does a man dare to acquit himself with pathos and



fervour! And the men are themselves mechanical and methodical in the bad way, who are most afraid of the artificial training that is given in the schools, and who so often show by the fruit of their labour that the want of oratory is the want of education.

How remarkable is sweetness of voice in the mother, in the father, in the household! The music of no chorded instruments brought together is, for sweetness, like the music of familiar affection when spoken by brother and sister, or by father and mother.

Conversation itself belongs to oratory. Where is there a wider, a more ample field for the impartation of pleasure or knowledge than at a festive dinner? and how often do we find that when men, having well eaten and drunken, arise to speak, they are well qualified to keep silence and utterly disqualified to speak! How rare it is to find felicity of diction on such occasions! How seldom do we see men who are educated to a fine sense of what is fit and proper at gatherings of this kind! How many men there are who are weighty in argument, who have abundant resources, and who are almost boundless in their power at other times and in other places, but who when in company among their kind are exceedingly unapt in their methods. Having none of the secret instruments by which the elements of nature may be touched, having no skill and no power in this direction, they stand as machines before living, sensitive men. A man may be as a master before an instrument; only the instrument dead; and he has the living hand; and out of that head instrument what wondrous harmony springs forth at his touch! And if you can electrify an audience by the power of a living man on dead things, how much more should that audience be electrified when the chords are living and the man is alive, and he knows how to touch them with divine inspiration!

I advocate, therefore, in its full extent, and for every reason of humanity, of patriotism, and of religion, a more thorough culture of oratory; and I define oratory to be the *art of influencing conduct with the truth sent home by all the resources of the living man*. Its aim is not to please men, but to build them up; and the pleasure which it imparts is one of the methods by which it seeks to do this. It aims to get access to men by allaying their prejudices. A person who, with unwelcome truths, under-

takes to carry them to men who do not want them, but who need them, undertakes a task which is like drawing near to a fortress. The times have gone by, but you remember them, when, if I had spoken here on certain themes belonging to patriotism which now are our glory, I should have stood before you as before so many castles locked and barred. How unwelcome was the truth! But if one had the art of making the truth beautiful; if one had the art of coaxing the keeper of the gate to turn the key and let the interloping thought come in; if one could by persuasion control the Cerberus of hatred, of anger, of envy, of jealousy, that sits at the gate of men's souls, and watches against unwelcome truths; if one could by eloquence give sops to this monster, and overcome him, would it not be worth while to do it? Are we to go on still cudgelling, and cudgelling, and cudgelling men's ears with coarse processes? Are we to consider it a special providence when any good comes from our preaching or our teaching? Are we never to study how skillfully to pick the lock of curiosity, to unfasten the door of fancy, to throw wide open the halls of emotion, and to kindle the light of inspiration in the souls of men? Is there any reality in oratory? It is all real.

First, in the orator is the man. Let no man who is a sneak try to be an orator. The method is not the substance of oratory. A man who is to be an orator must have something to say. He must have something that in his very soul he feels to be worth saying. He must have in his nature that kindly sympathy which connects him with his fellow men, and which so makes him a part of the audience which he moves as that his smile is their smile, that his tear is their tear, and that the throb of his heart becomes the throb of the hearts of the whole assembly. A man that is humane, a lover of his kind, full of all earnest and sweet sympathy for their welfare, has in him the original element, the substance, of oratory, which is truth; but in this world truth needs nursing and helping; it needs every advantage; for the underflow of life is animal, and the channels of human society have been taken possession of by lower influences beforehand. The devil squatted on human territory before the angel came to dispossess him. Pride and intolerance, arrogance and its cruelty, selfishness and its greed, all the lower appetites and passions,

do swarm, and do hold in thrall the underman that each one of us yet carries—the man of flesh, on which the spirit-man seeks to ride, and by which too often he is thrown and trampled under foot. The truth in its attempt to wean the better from the worse needs every auxiliary and every adjuvant.

Therefore, the man who goes forth to speak the truth, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, and goes with the determination that they *shall* hear; the man who carries victory in his hope; the man who has irrefragable courage—it is not enough that he has in his soul this element, which, though it be despised, is the foundation element, and which comes first by birth, thanks to your father and mother, thanks to the providence that gave you such a father and such a mother, and thanks to the God who inspires it and sanctifies it. With this predisposition and this substance of truth which men need, and which is to refashion human life in all its parts, the question arises whether there is need of anything more than gracious culture. Well, so long as men are in the body they need the body. There are some who think they have well nigh crucified the body. If they have, why are they lingering here below, where they are not useful, and where they are not needed? So long as men touch the ground, and feel their own weight, so long they need the aptitudes and the instrumentalities of the human body; and one of the very first steps in oratory is that which trains the body to be the welcome and glad servant of the soul—which it is not always; for many and many a one who has acres of thought has little bodily culture, and as little grace of manners; and many and many a one who has sweetening inside has cacophony when he speaks. Harsh, rude, hard, bruising, are his words.

The first work, therefore, is to teach a man's body to serve his soul; and in this work the education of the bodily presence is the very first step. We had almost extinguished the power of the human body by our pulpits, which, in early days, were the sources and centres of popular eloquence such as there was; for men followed the Apocalyptic figure of the candlestick, and the minister being supposed to be the light in it. In those days of symbolization everything had to be symbolized; and when a church was built they made a pulpit that was like the socket of a candlestick, and put a man into it; and thus entubbed he



looked down afar upon his congregation to speak unto them! Now, what man could win a coy and proud companion if he were obliged to court at fifty feet distance from her? or, what man, pleading for his life, would plead afar off, as through a speaking trumpet, from the second story, to one down below?

Nay, men have been covered up. The introduction of platforms has been thought, on the whole, to be a somewhat discourteous thing. I will tell you, if you will indulge me, a little reminiscence of my own experience. In the church where I minister there is no pulpit; there was only a platform; and some of the elect ladies, honourable and precious, waited upon me to know if I would not permit a silk screen to be drawn across the front of my table, so that my legs and feet need not be seen. My reply to them was: "I will, on one condition—that whenever I make a pastoral call at your houses you will have a green silk bag into which I may put my legs."

If the legs and feet are tolerable in a saloon, or in a social room, why are they not tolerable on a platform? It takes the whole man to make a man; and at times there are no gestures that are comparable to the simple stature of the man himself. So it behooves us to train men to use the whole of themselves. Frequently the foot is emphasis, and the posture is oftentimes power, after a word, or accompanying a word; and men learn to perceive the thought coming afar off from the man himself who foreshadows it by his action.

You shall no longer, when men are obliged to stand disclosed before the whole audience, see ministers bent over a desk, like a weary horse crooked over a hitching block, and preaching first on one leg, and then on the other. To be a gentleman in the presence of an audience is one of the first lessons which oratory will teach the young aspiring speaker.

But, besides that, what power there is in posture, or in gesture! By it, how many discriminations are made; how many smooth things are rolled off; how many complex things men are made to comprehend! How many things the body can tongue when the tongue itself can not well utter the thing desired! The tongue and the person are to co-operate; and having been trained to work together, the result is spontaneous, unthought of, unarranged for.

Now, to the real natural man—and the natural man is the educated man; not the thing from which he sprang—how much is to be added! Many a man will hear the truth for the pleasure of hearing it; and so there must be something more than its plain statement. Among other things, the voice—perhaps the most important of all, and the least cultured—should not be forgotten. How many men are there that can speak from day to day one hour, two hours, three hours, without exhaustion, and without hoarseness? But it is in the power of the vocal organs, and of the ordinary vocal organs, to do this. What multitudes of men weary themselves out because they put their voice on a hard run at the top of its compass!—and there is no relief to them, and none, unfortunately, to the audience. But the voice is like an orchestra. It ranges high up, and can shriek betimes like the scream of an eagle; or it is low as a lion's tone; and at every intermediate point is some peculiar quality. It has in it the mother's whisper and the father's command. It has in it warning and alarm. It has in it sweetness. It is full of mirth and full of gaiety. It glitters, though it is not seen with all its sparkling fancies. It ranges high, intermediate, or low, in obedience to the will, unconsciously to him who uses it; and men listen through the long hour, wondering that it is so short, and quite unaware that they have been bewitched out of their weariness by the charm of a voice, not artificial, not prearranged in the man's thought, but by assiduous training made to be his second nature. Such a voice answers to the soul, and it is its beating.

Now, against this training manifold objections are made. It is said that it is unworthy of manhood that men should be so trained. The conception of a man is that of blunt earnestness. It is said that if a man knows what he wants to say, he can say it; that if he knows what he wants to have men do, the way is for him to pitch at them. That seems to be about the idea which ordinarily prevails on this subject. Shoot a man, as you would a rocket in war; throw him as you would a hand grenade, and afterwards, if you please, look to see where he hits; and woe be to those who touch the fragments! Such appears to be the notion which many have on this subject. But where else, in what other relation, does a man so reason? Here is the highest

function to which any man can address himself—the attempt to vitalize men; to give warmth to frigid natures; to give aspirations to the dull and low flying; to give purpose to conduct, and to evolve character from conduct; to train every part of one's self—the thinking power; the perceptive power, the intuitions; the imagination; all the sweet and overflowing emotions. The grace of the body; its emphasis; its discriminations; the power of the eye and of the voice—all these belong to the blessedness of this work.

“No,” says the man of the school of the beetle, “buzz, and fight, and hit where you can.” Thus men disdain this culture as though it were something effeminate; as though it were a science of ornamentation; as though it were a means of stealing men's convictions, not enforcing them; and as though it lacked calibre and dignity.

But why should not this reasoning be applied to everything else? The very man who will not train his own voice to preach, to lecture, to discourse, whether in the field or in the legislative hall, or in the church, will pay large dues through weary quarters to drill his daughter's voice to sing hymns, and canzonets, and other music. This is not counted to be unworthy of the dignity of womanhood.

“But,” it is said, “does not the voice come by nature?” Yes; but is there anything that comes by nature which stays as it comes if it is worthily handled? We receive one talent that we may make it five; and we receive five talents that we may make them ten. There is no one thing in man that he has in perfection till he has it by culture. We know that in respect to everything but the voice. Is not the ear trained to acute hearing? Is not the eye trained in science? Do men not school the eye, and make it quick seeing by patient use? Is a man, because he has learned a trade, and was not born with it, thought to be less a man? Because we have made discoveries of science, and adapted them to manufacture; because we have developed knowledge by training, are we thought to be unmanly? Shall we, because we have unfolded our powers by the use of ourselves for that noblest of purposes, the inspiration and elevation of mankind, be less esteemed? Is the school of human training to be disdained when by it we are rendered more useful to our fellow men?



But it is said that this culture is artificial; that it is mere posturing; that it is simple ornamentation. Ah! that is not because there has been so much of it, but because there has been so little of it. If a man were to begin, as he should, early; or if, beginning late, he were to addict himself assiduously to it, then the graces of speech, the graces of oratory, would be to him what all learning must be before it is perfect, namely, spontaneous. If he were to be trained earlier, then his training would not be called the science of ostentation or of acting.

Never is a man thoroughly taught until he has forgotten how he learned. Do you remember when you tottered from chair to chair? Now you walk without thinking you learned to walk. Do you remember when your inept hands wandered through the air toward the candle, or toward the mother's bosom? Now how regulated, how true to your wish, how quick, how sharp to the touch, are those hands? But it was by learning that they became so far perfected. Their perfection is the fruit of training.

Let one think of what he is doing, and he does it ill. If you go into your parlour, where your wife and children are, you always know what to do with yourself—or almost always! You are not awkward in your postures, nor are you awkward with your hands; but let it be understood that there are a dozen strangers to be present, and you begin to think how to appear well before them; and the result of your thinking about it is that you appear very ill. Where to put your hands, and where to put yourself, you do not know; how to stand or how to sit troubles you; whether to hold up one hand or the other hand, or to hold both down, or both up, is a matter of thought with you.

Let me walk on the narrowest of these boards upon which I stand, and I walk with simplicity and perfect safety, because I scarcely think of walking; but lift that board fifty feet above the ground, and let me walk on it as far as across this building, and let me think of the consequences that would result if I were to fall, and how I would tremble and reel! The moment a man's attention is directed to that which he does, he does it ill. When the thing which a man does is so completely mastered as that there is an absence of volition, and he does it without knowing it, he does it easily; but when the volition is not subdued, and when, therefore, he does not act spontaneously, he is conscious

of what he does, and the consciousness prevents his doing it easily. Unconsciousness is indispensable to the doing a thing easily and well.

Now, in regard to the training of the orator, it should begin in boyhood, and should be part and parcel of the lessons of the school. Grace; posture; force of manner; the training of the eye, that it may look at men, and pierce them, and smile upon them, and bring summer to them, and call down storms and winter upon them; the development of the hand, that it may wield the sceptre, or beckon with sweet persuasion—these things do not come artificially: they belong to man. Why, men think that Nature means that which lies back of culture. Then you ought never to have departed from babyhood; for that is the only nature you had to begin with. But is nature the acorn forever? Is not the oak nature? Is not that which comes from the seed the best representation of the divine conception of the seed? And as men we are seeds. Culture is but planting them and training them according to their several natures: and nowhere is training nobler than in preparing the orator for the great work to which he educates himself—the elevation of his kind, through truth, through earnestness, through beauty, through every divine influence.

But it is said that the times are changing, and that we ought not to attempt to meddle with that which God has provided for. Say men, "The truth is before you; there is your Bible; go preach the Word of God." Well, if you are not to meddle with what God has provided for, why was not the Bible sent instead of you? You were sent because the very object of a preacher was to give the truth a living form, and not have it lie in the dead letter. As to its simplicity and as to its beauty, I confute you with your own doctrine; for, as I read the sacred text, it is "Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour." We are to make it beautiful. There are times when we can not do it. There are times for the sword, and there are times for the battle axe; but these are exceptional. "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification" is a standing command; and we are to take the truth, of every kind, and if possible bring it in its summer guise to men.

But it is said, "Our greatest orators have not been trained."

How do you know? It may be that Patrick Henry went crying in the wilderness of poor speakers, without any great training; I will admit that now and then there are gifts so eminent and so impetuous that they break through ordinary necessities; but even Patrick Henry was eloquent only under great pressure; and there remain the results of only one or two of his efforts. Daniel Webster is supposed in many respects to have been the greatest American orator of his time; but there never lived a man who was so studious of everything he did, even to the buttons on his coat, as Daniel Webster. Henry Clay was prominent as an orator, but though he was not a man of the schools, he was a man who schooled himself; and by his own thought and taste and sense of that which was fitting and beautiful, he became, through culture, an accomplished orator.

If you go from our land to other lands; if you go to the land which has been irradiated by parliamentary eloquence; if you go to the people of Great Britain; if you go to the great men in ancient times who lived in the intellect; if you go to the illustrious names that everyone recalls—Demosthenes and Cicero—they represent a life of work.

Not until Michelangelo had been the servant and the slave of matter did he learn to control matter; and not until he had drilled and drilled and drilled himself were his touches free and easy as the breath of summer, and full of colour as the summer itself. Not until Raphael had subdued himself by colour was he the crowning artist of beauty. You shall not find one great sculptor, nor one great architect, nor one great painter, nor one eminent man in any department of art, nor one great scholar, nor one great statesman, nor one divine of universal gifts, whose greatness, if you inquire, you will not find to be the fruit of study, and of the evolution that comes from study.

It is said, furthermore, that oratory is one of the lost arts. I have heard it said that our struggles brought forth not one prominent orator. This fact reveals a law which has been overlooked—namely, that aristocracy diminishes the number of great men, and makes the few so much greater than the average that they stand up like the pyramids in the deserts of Egypt; whereas, democracy distributes the resources of society, and brings up the whole mass of the people; so that under a democratic govern-



ment great men never stand so high above the average as they do when society has a level far below them. Let building go up on building around the tallest spire in this city, and you dwarf the spire, though it stand as high as heaven, because everything by which it is surrounded has risen higher.

Now, throughout our whole land there was more eloquence during our struggles than there was previously; but it was in far more mouths. It was distributed. There was in the mass of men a higher method of speaking, a greater power in addressing their fellow men; and though single men were not so prominent as they would have been under other circumstances, the reason is one for which we should be grateful. There were more men at a higher average, though there were fewer men at an extreme altitude.

Then it is said that books, and especially newspapers, are to take the place of the living voice. Never! never! The miracle of modern times, in one respect, is the Press; to it is given a wide field and a wonderful work; and when it shall be clothed with all the moral inspirations, with all the ineffable graces, that come from simplicity and honesty and conviction, it will have a work second almost to none other in the land. Like the light, it carries knowledge every day round the globe. What is done at St. Paul's in the morning is known, or ever half the day has run around, in Wall Street, New York. What is done in New York at the rising of the sun is, before the noontide hour, known in California. By the power of the wire, and of the swift-following engine, the papers spread at large vast quantities of information before myriad readers throughout the country; but the office of the papers is simply to convey information. They can not plant it. They can not enforce it. It is given only to the living man, standing before men with the seed of knowledge in his hand, to open the furrows in the living souls of men, and sow the seed, and cover the furrows again. Not until human nature is other than it is, will the function of the living voice—the greatest force on earth among men—cease. Not until then will the orator be useless, who brings to his aid all that is fervid in feeling; who incarnates in himself the truth; who is for the hour the living reason, as well as the reasoner; who is for the moment the moral sense; who carries in himself the importunity

and the urgency of zeal; who brings his influence to bear upon men in various ways; who adapts himself continually to the changing conditions of the men that are before him; who plies them by softness and by hardness, by light and by darkness, by hope and by fear; who stimulates them or represses them, at his will. Nor is there, let me say, on God's footstool, anything so crowned and so regal as the sensation of one who faces an audience in a worthy cause, and with amplitude of means, and defies them, fights them, controls them, *conquers* them.

Great is the advance of civilization; mighty are the engines of force, but man is greater than that which he produces. Vast is that machine which stands in the dark unconsciously lifting, lifting—the only humane slave—the iron slave—the Corliss engine; but he that made the engine is greater than the engine itself. Wonderful is the skill by which that most exquisite mechanism of modern life, the watch, is constructed; but greater is the man that made the watch than the watch that is made. Great is the Press, great are the hundred instrumentalities and institutions and customs of society; but above them all is man. The living force is greater than any of its creations—greater than society, greater than its laws. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," saith the Lord. Man is greater than his own institutions. And this living force is worthy of all culture—of all culture in the power of beauty; of all culture in the direction of persuasion; of all culture in the art of reasoning.

To make men patriots, to make men Christians, to make men the sons of God, let all the doors of heaven be opened, and let God drop down charmed gifts—winged imagination, all perceiving reason, and all judging reason. Whatever there is that can make men wiser and better—let it descend upon the head of him who has consecrated himself to the work of mankind, and who has made himself an orator for man's sake and for God's sake.

## XXV

### EXTRACTS FROM TRUE PREACHING

**I**N this lecture in its original form, given in England in 1886, there are so many ideas that do not conform to our immediate purpose and so much that is a repetition of what has already been said, that I have omitted most of it. Yet, there are two important ideas which are so well expressed here that they demand inclusion in the book. Beecher's emphasis upon the character of the speaker is reminiscent of Aristotle's remarks on ethical proof. How closely parallel are Beecher's words can be seen by this quotation from Aristotle: "Ethical proof is wrought when the speech is so spoken as to make the speaker credible; for we trust good men more and sooner as a rule, about everything; while, about things which do not admit of precision, but only of guesswork, we trust them absolutely. It is not true, as some of the technical writers assume in their systems, that the moral worth of the speaker contributes nothing to his persuasiveness, nay, it might be said that almost the most authoritative proof is that supplied by character." The other important thought for the public speaker contained in this lecture is that the speaker must feel the emotion if he is to move an audience. "If you want to make men cry, you must cry first."

Now, while physical truth and abstract philosophy need not depend on the character of the teacher, yet all social and all moral truth depend largely upon the living exemplification of them. A man's calculations in astronomy have nothing to do with whether he is a curmudgeon or a gentleman; a man's deductions in geology, a man's teaching in botany have nothing to do with his personal character. The meanest man in the university may, after all, be one of the clearest men in the production of truth. All that class of truth that belongs to the senses and, as we may



say, to the outside of a man does not depend upon the character of the man that teaches it; but all that truth that is social, that has relation to the affections and sympathies of mankind, and all that truth that is spiritual, that lifts a man up into the ideal, into a higher conception of right and duty, and the beauty of love and the service of God and the hope of immortality—all those truths do largely depend upon the man that teaches them. For if a man be himself known to be morose, faultfinding, and if he growls out: "You ought to love God," there is no man in creation who would be led in that way to try and love God; the influence of such a man would batter the whole thing to pieces. But if a man is known to be himself just and generous, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, full of gentleness, and if he should say: "I beseech you by the mercies of God that ye be reconciled through Jesus Christ," everyone will say: "That is persuasion, that is what he lives—it is beautiful; there is reason in statement, there is reason in his life. . . ."

I bring before you, say, the scene that we read of this morning; I never could read it without the deepest feeling—Christ healing the blind man, and the man waxing courageous by opposition, and refusing to deny his benefactor though he did not know Him. He was ignominiously expelled from the church, and seems to have had to leave home and the city and wander out forlorn and alone; and the moment Jesus heard of it He went after him, hunted for him, and when He found him He said: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" And the restored blind man said: "Who is He that I might believe?" "It is He that healed thee; it is He that is before thee." "Lord, I believe!" I can not read the story without tears, and you can not hear me read it, and see that my eyes are suffused, and not feel it yourself. You know the old Latin proverb that says: *Si vis me flere, dolendum est, primum ipsi tibi*—"If you want to make men cry, you must cry first." Whenever you see anyone in tears you instantly feel a pathetic mood come on you. Or if you go into a house of merriment, and brilliant jests are flying through the air like a rocket, you begin to laugh even before you know what the jest is. The feeling of mirth in another begets the same in you at once. Or if you get into a crowd and see men with scowling brows and doubled fists—not a theological

crowd, but some other sort—you at once begin to say: “What is this?” and you feel excited; one man’s feelings beget the same in another man. Every man of a strong nature finds an echo in others who come round about him, in the distinctively common feelings of mankind. So it is all the way through. I have known parents who, because their children have been angry, have got angry too. “You little rascal!” they say. “What do you mean by losing your temper? Take that!” When the child is angry, that is the time for the parent to be gentle; when the child is selfish, that is the time for the parent to subdue him by pouring generous treatment over him. If you want anybody to be anything, be that yourself in their presence, and they will incline to it.

## XXVI

### ADDRESS TO STUDENTS

**T**HE original lecture has been cut somewhat to conform to the purpose of this book. Before an audience of six hundred preachers whose personal cards J. B. Pond had collected at the door and as many theological students from all over London, in 1886, Beecher took up such questions as, "Is the pulpit losing its power?" "What is the nature of the difference between lecturing and preaching?" Of especial interest to us is the description of his own method of speech composition as an answer to one of the questions put to him. The story of how he learned to preach is repeated, and the peculiar manner in which he prepared his sermon is given. It is interesting that he warns of the dangers of his method. The importance of emotion in preaching is considered again. And, finally, the place of method in preaching is taken up.

Now, in the first place, let us ask—Is that true which is being reported up and down through the papers? Has the pulpit lost its power? Is it going to lose it? Are there agencies of instruction in religion dispossessing it of the public ear? Was its power the fact that it rose in an ignorant age, and that it has, therefore, by the very law of development dug its own funeral and put itself out of power? What is the power of the pulpit primarily? It is the power of preaching; for though there is something else in the minister's life except the preaching, this is its central and characteristic element, and the question may therefore be changed, not "Is the pulpit losing its power?" but "Is preaching losing its power?" Now, I hold that preaching is simply the extension of that which has existed from the beginning, and in all forms of society, all conditions and institutions, it is the application of personal emotion and thought to living



people. It is not teaching alone, though it may be teaching and should be teaching, but it is the power of one living man to lay himself, with his thought and his emotion, on the heart and intelligence of another living man.

Now go back to the very beginning, the mother is the first preacher. It is not always the wisdom of what she says, it is not always the things that she believes, but her mother's heart murmuring to a child's heart, that is preaching, that is the thing that is power, and in its very origin! If you go out from the family you may not see it in so affecting a manner, but you will see it in friendships, where, for instance, friend with friend is discussing; there is everything besides the mere theme in the connection between the speaker and hearer; there is the throb of the man's heart; there are all those fine filaments of feeling; all those elements of imagination that go to constitute individual personalities, and friend talking with friend is a power quite over and above what he says or what he believes. And go on to the teacher, the same is true of him. There are many maidens who have many calls, but are hard-hearted toward them; but when the true preacher comes to them—one word from his lips is more influential with her than all the rest of them put together. He has the art of putting a living heart on a living heart, and that is power. That is the root of preaching; I do not undertake to say that it absorbs into itself everything, I shall have occasion to speak of that a little further on. Now, I hold that emotion with intellect, emotion as the bow and the intellect as the arrow, that is preaching, that is the philosophy of it in a figure. A man must have faith or everything falls dead or becomes a mere lectureship.

There are many things on which a man speaking can not be a preacher. I could not gush if I were discussing the question of crystallography; I could not have any great emotion to send home if I were dealing with the higher mathematics. So, in regard to many kinds of truth, there can not in the nature of things be anything that goes higher than lecturing. Lecturing is intellectual exposition, legitimate, indispensable in its own place, and in regard to its own subjects; but preaching is something higher than that; it is that that is in common between the preacher and the hearer, it is that that belongs jointly to the

sphere of thought and of feeling, and it has in it a definite purpose or end in view, which it is seeking by thought and by emotion to procure in the minds of all that are listening to it. It has in it, therefore, the element of thought and the element of emotion, and the element of persuasion, and the element of acquiescence in the audience, for they act back and forth, the preacher on the audience and the audience on the preacher. Now, with regard to this I do not hesitate to say that it is the one power that can not have a parallel, and that, beginning in the lowest conditions of social life, the family, and the friendship, and the neighbourhood and the school, it has its noblest development in the church of Christ Jesus. We may not have "apostolicity" as the word goes, we may not have absolute orthodoxy, if anyone can tell you what that is. We may have a variety of gifts, but there is one gift that belongs to the Church universal, which the Church universal should see to it that it is not dispossessed of, and that is to take the grandest themes that can come to the thought of man—time, life, character, conduct, immortality, and the hope of it, God and man, and the universe. These be the themes, and the method is the ripening of a man's moral consciousness in such a way as that he can pour out his soul like a flood upon listening and acquiescing men. That is the gift to the Church. The one instrument that belongs to the Church, the organ, that manifold grand instrument, and that is in itself the *résumé*, if I might say so, of all the instruments that have ever, separately and singly, been created; it belongs to the Church, thank God, to the cathedral, to the temple, and to every little church everywhere. It is understood and known to be its possession. Preaching and music, sacred and organic, belong to the Church, and the Church is bound to see that it is not dispossessed of its peculiar treasures. It may be this gift and art of preaching may not be used, it may be overcrowded, it may be laid aside by novelties, or by habit or custom in any community, but it is there, it can be resumed again. It may be weak in one generation, it comes up again in the next. In some hands it may be comparatively powerless, but there are others in whose hands it has a power the equal of which does not exist among men. . . .

And yet I hear men saying that the day is come when the

newspaper is going to dispossess preaching. The newspaper is the carrier of preaching, it is a carrier of news; newspapers do not invent news, or ought not to. But it is a matter of gratitude that the newspaper has come into existence, and that it is widening the bounds of its power, and that it has become really in fellowship with Christian truth and Christian service. But, then, what is the mailbag compared with the lover that has got his letters in it? It is a carrier, not an originator, in regard to the themes which mostly appertain to the moral and religious life of the community, although it is going to widen the sphere of the pulpit, and is going materially to react again on the habits of preaching. For a man in a pulpit in a little neighbourhood, with a clique of men that believe just as he thinks, goes over and over again, and narrows himself, or tends to do it, or is desiccated and gets dry and insipid; but where a man is conscious that what he is saying today in the air will be proclaimed on the housetop by the outrunning newspapers, he can not but have larger thought, and a larger sympathy, and a larger influence. But the newspaper is the auxiliary, not the leader. Nor can science make any pretension to take the place of the preacher. We are greatly indebted to it. Science, if it be ripe and right, is the commentary on God's Old Testament of the natural world, and it may be and will be an adjutant, will clear up many doubts, will destroy many dogmas—thank God—and in various ways will make itself useful. It never will be that which the human soul needs in its aspirations and longings, temptations, and distresses, and troubles, in youth, in mid-life or in old age, in happiness or in prosperity, in adversity and sorrow, in the prison or in the mountains of the refuge. Science can not come to bring comfort as well as light to men; it is only religion that brings hope and light and life and immortality. Therefore, science is a cane, religion is the man that walks with it and helps himself along the rough road of life. . . .

There are some things that belong to the levels of all men alike, but then there are some other things that belong to different levels, and to certain lines of people. I think that a man going into the midst of an intelligent audience does not need to preach in the same way that he would if he were going out into the street in the midst of a dragonnade, or among poor and



ignorant men. The lower down you go in humanity, the more need there is of emotion in preaching; but as you go up you come to a line of people who are not injured by suitable emotion; but it must be of a more refined kind. They demand something more than emotion. There is no reason why you should not feed them. And there be many that go up still higher. They are not only emotive and intelligent, but refined. There is a development of the element of beauty in their life, and thought and feeling. The minister ought to preach the gospel in the language in which these folks are born. There is no reason why a man should not preach to the philosophical in one way, preach to lawyers in the Temple as if they understood higher themes. I don't mean by that that there is one gospel for the bottom and another for the middle and another for the top, but that the method by which you bring to the minds of men, the doors through which you can enter to their moral conscience, are different. The unchangeable elements, love to God and love to man, require no speculative emotive outpouring, but adaptation comes in. . . .

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*Dear Sir, you have told us that our life as ministers must be a sacrifice, that we must be the servants of all men; you have told us, also, we must be inspired by love to God to win men; you have told us that our preaching must be logical and full of power. I want to know how we are to get this; that is the great point, it seems to me, not to know what is the power, but how to get the power. We find this exemplified in the cases of George Whitefield and John Wesley, and some other such men. I want to know this morning how to get that power.*

I will answer that. Do not be discouraged because, being an apprentice, you are not a journeyman. There is the element of an art as well as of a profession, and every young preacher—there may be one exception in ten thousand—but ordinarily the young preacher has got to learn his business, and he has got to creep before he can walk, and walk before he can run. When you are beginning to preach, do not be discouraged because you do not come up to your own ideal; do not be discouraged because after a year you look back on your ministry and see that it is

very imperfect and wretched, and does not answer your ambition at all. That is one of the best symptoms possible for a young man to have. Do not think that you have preached everything that you are going to preach because you put a big thought finally as the result of a great deal of work into a sermon or a series of them. Be humble, and go on to do the best you can today and the best you can next time, and the horizon will open wider and wider. I laboured under great disadvantages in coming into the Christian ministry. My father was a very eminent theologian and preacher, and that is enough to beat the head in of any son of his that comes after him; because we are all measured by the reputation of the father. I went off out of the city. I went out into the country. I really expected to live and die in Indiana, and it is in my heart to do it yet—I love the State. I went into the woods, and on the prairies, and everywhere. I had very little to say. I had gone through the whole circle of debate and theology, and so on. I had had more than enough of it. I had had a revelation of the nature of Christ, and at first it was not more than a start to me. It grew, however, more and more, but it was not until I had been preaching about four or five years that I had a horizon that extended around the whole circle. I preached in disquietude and in almost discouragement during that time, but at last I came to that feeling—"I do believe that I shall now be a preacher." I began to see how I could do the things by preaching that I set out to do, and it was a blessed finding out, too. I think it was Correggio who, when he made his first and only visit to Rome, having been a painter in his own province, and comparatively unknown, went to see the works of Michelangelo, Titian, and Raphael. All that he said as he looked round on them was: "I, too, am a painter." He did not say he was equal to them, but he saw in looking at their works that he had got hold of the element, and that he was a painter. I remember the day when I said I was a preacher; I had with tears and sorrow laboured to do something that would startle men. I sat down and took the Book of Acts, and analyzed it to see what it was that enabled the Apostles to produce such effects. I got an idea—it was a very imperfect one—that has been corrected since, but I got an idea about it, and I said: "Now, I will construct on these lines, not a repetition of this sermon,

but I will make a sermon that shall be adapted to the state, the want, and feeling of such communities as there are here." I knocked over thirteen men with that sermon. I never had had a fish-bite before, and the moment that I came home I said, "Oh, I have got it! I have got it! I know now how it is going to be done." Well, I tried it again and the next time, and I failed totally, and I had more tumbles down than I had standings up, but through poor sermons and good sermons I pressed forward until I got to the degree of fluency that I have attained. And I want you to understand one thing—I do not consider myself a good preacher. As God is my Judge my sermons are continually condemning me, not in the mere matter of scope and thought, but in the soul qualities. I ought to live better and be better to enable me to make sermons that shall be worthy of my Master, Jesus Christ. Do not be discouraged because you make poor work of preaching at first. Go on! . . .

*Will Mr. Beecher kindly give us his opinion as to the practice of reading sermons in the pulpit?*

It depends very much on two things—what the sermon is, and what the fellow is that reads it. I have heard sermons read that were a great deal more vital and effective than what are called extemporaneous sermons, and, on the other hand, I have heard the other thing exactly.

*Would Mr. Beecher kindly give us his opinion regarding the length of our sermons?*

As long as your people want to hear you, so long you may be at liberty to extend your sermon, but when folks begin to gape and look at their watches, and look round at the door, and children get fretful, that man's a fool that goes on with his sermon.

*Would Mr. Beecher favour us with his own method of preparing for the pulpit?*

I am afraid that I should ruin men. My whole life is a general preparation. Everything I read, everything I think, all the time—whether it is secular, philosophic, metaphysic, scientific—it all goes into the atmosphere with me, and then when the time comes for me to do anything—I do not know why it should be so, except that I am of that temperament—it crystallizes, and very suddenly too, and so much of it as I am going to use for



that distinct time comes right up before my mind in full form, and I sketch it down and rely upon my facility, through long experience, to give utterance and full development to it after I come before an audience. There is nothing in this world that is such a stimulus to me as an audience; it wakes up the power of thinking and wakes up the power of imagination in me, and I should say it would be a great blessing if you were just so; but it is not worth your while to try it until after you have practised alone a little while.

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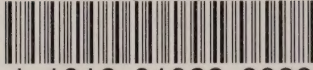
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